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ABSTRACT

Based on materials originally prepared for a course being developed at an Australian university, this book examines critical issues in distance education and open learning. The book is organized in five parts. The first part locates distance education in relation to education and social science and provides a general introduction and orientation. The other four parts provide a broad critical social scientific approach, each with an introduction by one of the editors and two contributors' chapters. The following articles are included: "An Epistemological Orientation to Critical Reflection in Distance Education" (Terry Evans); "Disability and Distance Education in Australia" (Christopher Newell, Judy Walker); "Gender Issues in Distance Education--A Feminist Perspective" (Margaret Grace); "On the Possibility of Dialogue in Distance Education: A Dialogue" (Helen Modra); "Teaching Texts and Independent Learning" (Daryl Nation); "Distance Education in a Developing Context: Ghana" (Kwasi Ansu-Kyeremeh); "Distance Education and the Developing World: Colonisation, Collaboration and Control" (Richard Guy); "Critical Essay on Technology in Distance Education" (Michael Campion); "Towards a Critical Educational Technology in Distance Education" (David Harris); and "Endnote: Beyond the Text" (Terry Evans, Bruce King). (387 references) (KC)

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Beyond the Text

Contemporary Writing on Distance Education

Terry Evans & Bruce King

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PART ONE

INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

TERRY EVANS AND BRUCE KING

Over the past two years we have worked together on the collaborative development of a new Master of Distance Education and Graduate Diploma of Distance Education program at Deakin University and the University of South Australia respectively. We were the people who initially established the collaboration and we have played an integral part in its management and operation ever since. An important part of our work has been to develop and teach one of the units – *Critical Issues in Distance Education* – within the new program. We used several consultants to help develop the materials which were in the form of several pieces of critical writing and audio-discussion on issues in distance education. Once the course was produced we had requests from people to purchase the materials but, mainly because the materials were bound into five books which included reproductions of other published material, the feasibility of selling the materials to individuals was problematic. Anne Howells was our editor at Deakin University who worked on the course during her exchange from the UK Open University – diolch am y pleser o gael gweithio gyda chi. Anne suggested that we edit a collection which contained the revised versions of the original writing. We asked each of the consultants if they were interested in such a project and, with a lot of help from Anne and some swift revisions by the contributors, this text was created.

Our intention was to produce a text which takes us beyond some of the established practices and ideas about distance education. It seemed that the structures, processes and practices of distance education needed identifying and subjecting to critical scrutiny by people who were applying forms of critique on issues of distance education. Identifying the structures, processes and practices of distance education is as easy as it appears because there are several competing understandings of what constitutes *distance education* and, especially its close companion *open learning* (see Rumble 1989a). Once understandings of distance education or open learning are formed they can be difficult to shake; they take on a paradigmatic quality which shapes our thinking so strongly that it takes significant contradictory experiences to shift them.

The well-known philosopher of science, Thomas Kuhn, has argued that the physical and natural sciences have not been a smooth process of development of rational thought and research, but rather have been a series of 'scientific revolutions', whereby each prevailing paradigm (or dominant way of thinking) is usurped by another as a result of significant research findings not fitting the prevailing paradigm (Kuhn 1970). In this sense, despite their more limited scope, history and pre-paradigmatic nature, distance education and open learning are no different from sciences; prevailing theories and practices of distance education and open learning can become firmly embedded as *the* way to think and work until a storm of contradictory pressures uproots them.

In the 1990s, distance education and open learning , in Australia and internationally, are facing a series of challenges which may lead to a major shift in the way the field is theorised and practised, or it may reinforce the prevailing orthodoxies. This book presents some of these debates and challenges and shows that the array of practices, structures and institutions do not rest easily together in a cosy nest of distance education. In fact, there appear to be a great many difficulties to overcome in contemporary distance education and we hope that the debates in this book help the reader to extend their own thinking in the area. This is not to suggest that distance education is alone in this regard. Generally, distance education, and education more generally, contain and reflect the contradictions and contestations which are the essence of contemporary societies. Therefore, the practices, structures and institutions of distance education are not mere unproblematic educational responses to societal needs, but rather they are locales of human and political interaction and contest. Matters of power and ideology loom large as governments, bureaucracies and individuals wrestle to establish their interests in distance education. Therefore, we can view distance education as a struggle between conflicting and competing interests out of which courses are developed and taught, students passed and failed, resources consumed, careers erected and shattered, etc.

The struggle at work in distance education is not one of continuous fights and skirmishes — much of this is masked or mediated through the structures in which practices are located and take place — but it is nevertheless a real presence in the everyday life of the people involved in distance education: teachers, students, administrators, educational designers, editors etc. In Australia, distance higher education is undergoing a series of changes brought about through the Australian government's restructuring of higher education and the establishment of the national Distance Education Centres (King 1989a). Most states have had their own reviews and restructuring of distance education within the school and Technical and Further Education (TAFE) sectors. There are international examples of similar structural and policy upheavals which represent their own crises for those involved. Recent history suggests that the tensions created by and through such upheavals are likely to produce further changes and that stability is a distant dream. Therefore, the need to adopt sustained critical analysis of government policies and their outcomes in practice is highly pertinent for distance education practitioners.

We had little difficulty in saying when developing our course that there was an area of curriculum which one might call *critical issues in distance education*, but we recognised that the course, and therefore this book, could not be a definitive exposition and analysis of critical issues in distance education. In a sense, it is inconsistent with the nature of the book that there ever could be such a thing as the definitive exposition and analysis, especially when it is produced as printed text and used well beyond its formation. In fact, it was very important to us that the book should reflect different writing on distance education and, in particular, should encourage its readers to think beyond the text and into their own experiences of distance education.

We have structured the book to cover some major areas of issues in distance education and open learning which any scholar and practitioner could be expected to recognise. We were familiar with contemporary matters and debates published in journals on distance education and open learning, and articulated in policy documents, meetings, conferences and through the mass-media. We had even made our own contributions to debates about distance education (see for example, Evans 1989a, 1989b; Evans & Nation 1988, 1989a, 1989b; King 1989a, 1989b; King & Forster 1985; Willmott & King 1984). On this basis we decided that we needed a chapter which located distance education epistemologically in relation to education and social science and to use this as a basis for charting a route toward the critical reflection and analysis of distance education. We then identified four areas which we believed ought to be addressed within what might be called a broad critical social scientific approach. Each of these areas forms a part within this book and includes an introduction by one of the editors and two contributors' chapters. The following parts and their contributors are as follows:

Part 2 Access and equity in distance education

'Access' and 'equity' are two terms frequently linked together in educational and other policy documents in Australia and they have their equivalents in other nations. Distance education has often been seen as a means to improve access and equity within education and, therefore, more broadly in society. Chapter 3 concerns distance education for people with disabilities and is written by Christopher Newell and Judi Walker of the University of Tasmania. Chapter 4 , which concerns issues of gender in distance education, is written by Margaret Grace who is an off-campus, full-time PhD student at Deakin University.

Part 3 Independence, autonomy and dialogue in distance education

Debates concerning the promotion of student independence and autonomy are to be found within the literature on distance education spanning at least the last two decades. The issues embedded within this topic cover aspects of empowerment, dialogue, discourse, 'guided didactic conversation' etc., as well as practical means of facilitating independence and autonomy in distance education. The issues in this topic can be quite complex and very rich, and they go to the heart of teaching itself. Chapter 5 is by Helen Modra of Deakin University who addresses the matter of dialogue in distance education through a dialogue with two of her colleagues, Lindsay Fitzclarence and Stephen Kemmis. Chapter 6 was written by Daryl Nation of Monash University College Gippsland and is concerned with his approaches to teaching through texts toward independent learning.

Part 4 Distance education in developing nations

Distance education is another product of industrialised nations which has been employed in various developing nations. The pedagogies, methods, technologies and techniques of distance education are predicated on Western notions of learning and social life, and depend on Western forms and levels of infrastructure. Many developing nations are importing courses, structures and models of distance education as part of their drive towards development. A range of issues are worth exploring in this engagement between distance education and the needs and circumstances of people in the developing world. Kwasi Ansu-Kyeremeh, now located in Canada, wrote Chapter 7 based on his research in Ghana on the use of educational media. Richard Guy , who works at the University of Papua New Guinea, discusses the problematic nature of practising distance education in developing nations in Chapter 8.

Part 5 Technology in distance education

The relationship between new technologies, especially in the communications field, and distance education is one which has been the subject of much rhetoric and expenditure in recent years. It seemed clear that the suppositions upon which technologies were developed and those which underpin distance education would provide a number of issues which need critical analysis. Michael Campion, from Murdoch University, provides a post-Fordist critique of technology in distance education in Chapter 9. David Harris, who is from the College of St Mark and St John, Plymouth and also tutors for the UK Open University, provides a critique of educational technology in distance education in Chapter 10.

We conclude the book with an endnote which reflects on some of the issues raised in the text and points to a way forward *Beyond the Text*.

CHAPTER 2

AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL ORIENTATION TO CRITICAL REFLECTION IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

TERRY EVANS

IN THIS CHAPTER AN epistemological foundation for critical approaches to reflecting on distance education is outlined. In this sense, the intention is to provide, not only a view of the forms of knowledge which underpin these approaches, but also a framework for making links to substantial areas of literature in relevant fields. This framework may be used to move beyond the text into other aspects of critical theory and the critical social and educational sciences. The chapter is organised as follows: an epistemological framework for distance education is discussed; reflective practice and Schön's conceptualisation of the reflective practitioner are introduced; then the chapter concludes by focussing on critical reflection. The intention is to locate distance education as an area of study within the broader educational and social sciences in a way which contrasts it with the natural sciences. The fundamental critical nature of social science is explained in relation to the development of critical theories themselves within the social sciences. In conclusion, critical reflection is presented as springboard into the rest of the book and beyond.

AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION

One can define subject disciplines as areas of knowledge, values, methods, theories and practices which possess a unifying nature. It is possible to have more demanding definitions of a discipline, but the point still remains even if, instead, they are called 'subject areas' or 'fields of study' and so forth. As disciplines become established and expand, they tend to split into smaller entities (sub-disciplines) as the interests of the people concerned take on greater detail and depth within particular areas. The reasons why particular disciplines or fields of study become established, developed and further fragmented areas are not entirely due to individual inspiration and action. As Giddens notes from the writings of Marx:

> Marx comments that 'Men (let us immediately say human beings) make history, but not in circumstances of their own choosing' Well, so they do. But what a diversity of complex problems of social analysis this apparently innocuous pronouncement turns out to disclose! (Giddens 1984, p.xxi)

In such terms, it is very difficult to chart the human history of a discipline without recognising the broader social, political and economic structures which shape the making of history. Likewise, the making of the social, economic and political structures is achieved through human endeavour and, as is especially important here, partly through the thinking which is formed through disciplines. In Foucault's (1969) view, disciplines may be seen as areas or 'unities of discourse' which frame people's thinking, actions, research and practices within what might be seen as an arbitrary boundary. Foucault argues that in order to understand, 'those disciplines — so unsure of their frontiers, and so vague in content' (no, he was not thinking of distance education, but rather the discipline) '... we call the history of ideas, or of thought, or of science or of knowledge' (Foucault 1969, p.21) it is necessary to disassemble the intellectual and practical pieces of the disciplines. Foucault claims:

> ... there is a negative work to be carried out first: we must rid ourselves of a whole mass of notions, each of which, in its own way, diversifies the theme of continuity. They may not have a very rigorous conceptual structure, but they have a precise function ... We must question these ready-made syntheses, those groupings that we normally accept before any examination, those links whose validity is recognized from the outset; we must oust those forms and obscure forces by which we usually link the discourse of one man with that of another ... And instead of according them unqualified, spontaneous value, we must accept, in the name of methodological rigour, that, in the first instance, they concern only a population of dispersed events. (Foucault 1969, pp.22–3)

If we took Foucault's argument and applied it to distance education as an area of study, what would we deconstruct from the 'diverse population of dispersed events' that comprises distance education? On the one hand we can see that distance education is, indeed, both diverse and dispersed in the forms and concepts which constitute its discourse. Holmberg has noted that:

> The study of distance education as a discipline of its own, or as an academic field of study composed of parts of other disciplines, has developed considerably during the past couple of decades. In 1960 ... that term had hardly been thought of. Very little had been written about the subject ...
>
> The picture looks very different towards the end of the 1980s. There is now a wealth of literature on distance education ... I feel the subject is now ripe for a summarizing presentation of theory and practice. (Holmberg 1989, p.x)

The 'dispersed events' were coming together in a unity which is named 'distance education' and which 'link(s) the discourses' of people who claim membership of its discipline. Holmberg's view is congruent with those who say that there is a discipline of distance education because we now have forms of discourse which call it as such and use concepts, theories and practices which stem from it. There are related 'disciplines', such as 'educational technology' or 'open education' which may be seen to have overlapping discourses to distance education. Yet distance education is a difficult term and it can lead to some grammatical contortions — distance teaching, distance learning, distance institutions. Would we have done better to have named our discipline differently? Would it have changed the 'unity' of the discourses within the discipline?

One of the ironies of the discipline of distance education is that it has had little room for the disciplines (discourses) which relate to distance, in particular those of geography. (Northcott (1984) was one of the first to do so, and his work related to Australian distance education in particular.) It is as if the term 'distance' and its connotations — even though they were used to select the term in the first place — are completely unimportant or irrelevant to the discipline itself. What can the discourses of geography offer? One might expect that, other than geographers, it might only be distance educators who could answer this question. Yet there has been an increasing interest amongst social theorists and geographers in the relationships between their disciplines. In particular, Giddens has been very influential in theorising the time-space features of social life. He says:

> Fundamental to social life is the positioning of the body in social encounters. 'Positioning' here is a rich term. The body is positioned in the immediate circumstances of co-presence in relation to others ... Positioning is, however, also to be understood in relation to the seriality of encounters across time–space. Every individual is at once positioned in the flow of day-to-day life; in the life-span which is the duration of his or her existence; and in

> the duration of 'institutional time', the 'supra-individual' structuration of social institutions. (Giddens 1984, pp.xxiv–xxv)

Taking Giddens's points, we can see at once that distance education addresses one aspect of the positioning of people, that is, in relation to those who find it difficult to engage in the forms of co-presence which constitute face-to-face learning. Distance education, in this respect, changes the co-presence relations required to obtain an education, but the apparent consequences of this are that various other forms of co-presence are available or required (e.g. teletutorials) and often forms of face-to-face co-presence are available or necessary (e.g. regional tutorials, summer schools). Then the question arises of what the consequences are of forms of education (distance education) which change (or acknowledge the absence of) the traditional educational forms of co-presence. What are the consequences for a person's learning? For their home life? What are the social consequences (e.g. in terms of the education of women, rural people, etc.)?

Having acknowledged distance education as a field of study, the intention has been to remain within the notion of an arbitrary unity of discourse, rather than anything more formal and institutional. If one recognises that subject areas or fields of study are demarcated by arbitrary boundaries, then those boundaries do separate them from one another; from discourses to which they might otherwise have been connected. What then are distance education's connections? Where is distance education located within the intellectual landscape?

A cursory glance at the literature of distance education shows that many of its concepts and ideas are ones shared with or taken from education more generally. Although there are differences of practice, broadly the discourses of education and distance education overlap to such an extent that one might have expected distance education to be a child of education as it matured as a discipline itself. However, this is not so much the case because distance-education discourses seem to have arisen from the shared interests of practitioners in the field, rather than as a separatist group from within education. These shared interests, as Willmott and King (1983) have argued, have emerged out of an unfounded faith in technology and associated myths and untested assumptions, yet the practices should be essentially educational, rather than technical, in nature.

It is interesting to note that schooling at a distance, which has obvious similarities with both distance education and education is, however, of marginal concern within both disciplines. This is in spite of the fact that such schooling was at the forefront of the development of distance education and is a very important aspect of distance education in developing nations today. One might have expected that, if distance education had sprung from education, then distance schooling would have been a central theme of the discourses of the discipline. This is not to deny that within distance education's antecedent, correspondence education, schooling may have had a more prominent place (see, for example, Holmberg 1967; Rayner 1949). It is arguable, that the rise of the UK Open University , and the consequent reinvigoration of adult distance education may have contributed both to the naming of distance education as a discipline (although the Open University was generally ambivalent about describing its own practices in this way) and the shifting of schooling to the margins.

Education itself has many discourses, some of which compete with each other for resources and favour. Most, if not all of the discourses within education, have links with other disciplines especially in the social sciences (such as anthropology, sociology, economics, politics) and in the behavioural sciences (psychology), management sciences (administration) and humanities (literary criticism, philosophy). Distance education has not developed the specialisms within its discourses which have been long evident in education, but the seeds of such specialisms are to be found in the literature and debates which form contemporary distance-education discourses. In such respects distance education and education can be seen to fall within the same area of intellectual territory which is broadly within the social sciences. An important symbolic aspect of this in academic life is that the Australian Research Council locates both education and distance education within the social sciences and humanities category. This category represents an enormous area of intellectual territory within which education is, perhaps, a significant landmark, and distance education a mere molehill.

If, broadly, education and social sciences are the territorial homes of distance education, then the natural sciences represent the other major continent of the intellectual landscape. The relationships between these two areas of intellectual life are often ones of misunderstanding and conflict. Very generally, social science has seen natural science as having the kudos and mystique, whereas natural science has seen social science as being about the obvious and commonsense. These are gross typifications, but they serve to give a hint of the sort of relationships which have existed between these two areas of intellectual effort for decades, if not centuries.

Giddens addresses the matter of the relationship between the natural and social sciences in the following way:

> The concepts and theories of natural science are entirely insulated from 'their' world, the object-world of nature. This absorption process ... helps to explain the apparent banality of social scientific findings as contrasted with what appear to be the far more innovative findings of natural science.
>
> The banality of social science was a major source of worry to practitioners of mainstream sociology. Why have not the social sciences generated discoveries about the social world which parallel those of natural science? If such discoveries are not made, we would seem to lack the capability of producing the

> 'technological' control upon which the practical connotations of social science (in the orthodox model) depend. If social science is apparently in a relatively primitive state, compared with natural science, it might simply be because the former developed at a considerably later date than the latter, and consequently has a large amount of catching up to do. Such was the usual view of the proponents of the orthodox consensus, but it is surely not one that has anything to commend it. Both social and natural science, in their modern guises, can be traced back in their origins to the Renaissance, and while the character of their development differs, one would be hard put to assign either a general temporal priority over the other. (Giddens 1987, pp.70–1)

Giddens's comments are pertinent to distance education, not only because distance education, as I have argued, can be located within the social sciences, but also because some of the views about the 'banality' of their discipline from distance educators might be similar to those of the social scientists to which Giddens refers. The drive for 'technological' control over learning by those who Evans and Nation (1987) call the 'instructional industrialists' in distance education can also be seen as an attempt to impose a form of positivist, naturalist science within distance education, partly to obtain the kudos and mystique that such mythical forms of control imply (Nation 1990). However, social science provides the capacity for shaping the theory and practice of distance education in ways which recognise the centrality of human agency in social life and, therefore, in distance education itself.

Reflective practice

Reflection can be seen as an essential human capacity for thinking about oneself, events or circumstances with a view to interpreting and understanding those things. It also recognises that people project themselves into those circumstances and reflect not only, using Mead's terms, on the 'I' but also the 'Me' which constitute the Self (Mead 1934, pp.152–64). Human culture and society have developed through the reflective process as people form and share their understandings with one another and take actions on these bases. This is not to suggest that life is merely the product of consensual navel gazing, or that each product of reflective is another step closer to the Truth. Rather, it is to point out that the reflective process is nothing special or unusual: it is a regular and routine occurrence. It is also a process which is surrounded and affected by the contradictions and contestations of social life.

An example of the routine reflection of everyday life occurs when we notice we are putting on weight and reflect on the consequences of this and what we can do to remedy the 'problem'. Our understanding of the weight increase might be influenced by our knowledge of what causes weight increase (eating too much, eating too much of certain foods, reduction in physical exercise) and by what we can do about it ('dieting', increasing physical workload, or a combination of these). On the basis of our reflection on the weight increase, we may take what we understand to be the necessary action and then reflect on the outcome. Needless to say there are several actions we could take – including not taking any action at all – which may lead to significant health problems!

In distance education practice, as with other forms of professional practice, reflection is an important part of the work process. If we notice that a course is experiencing a high student-withdrawal rate then we reflect on the possible causes ('heavy student workload', 'late mailing of materials', 'difficult first assignment', 'boring curriculum'). We may then take a series of decisions based on what our reflection on the problem leads us to believe (change the workload, assignment, curriculum, or establish and implement some evaluative research to find out more from the students who have withdrawn). Of course, not all reflection leads to action, as these above examples might be seen to imply; sometimes its outcome is to add to our understanding (or misunderstanding) of what is being reflected upon. I have used the examples here to illustrate the reflective process and it should be made explicit that the process is not one which leads to inevitable uncontested positive or emancipatory ends. Rather it may produce oppositional responses against the otherwise positive or emancipatory actions or the process can be used towards negative or oppressive ends.

The reflective practitioner

A key figure in the movement towards recognising and establishing the centrality of the reflective process to professional practice is Donald Schön (1987). He has argued that the preparation of people for the professions is based on what purports to be the theoretical knowledge-base of the particular profession but that, once engaged in practice, the practitioners develop their own theories, through reflection on their practice. Starratt describes Schön's position as follows:

> Schön's work and others' have led to the understanding that reflection is at the heart of effective practice. Practitioners who spend time thinking about the results of their actions, who puzzle out why things work and why they do not work, tend to build up a reservoir of insights and intuitions which they can call upon as they go about their work. Not only do they reflect after the fact, but they can bring this reflective frame of mind to the problem at hand. They are reflecting even in the moment of action so they can respond to the action as it unfolds.
>
> Theory enters into this reflection in action only as offering a possible explanation, and usually a *partial* explanation of the causes of or contributors to the problem at hand. In other words, theory provides frames or lenses by which one can analyze and

> explore a problem or situation; they sometimes help to illuminate and provide conceptual lineaments to one's intuition. Theory, however, sometimes blocks insight into other possible explanations of and solutions to the problem. Because theory structures or organizes experience according to a limited number of controlling concepts, it tends to blind the theorizer to phenomena that fall outside of those conceptual frames. (Starratt 1990, p.83)

A key aspect of Schön's ideas is that professionals work with 'knowledge in action'. Schön locates his ideas here in terms of professional artistry which he says refers:

> ... to the kinds of competence practitioners sometimes display in unique, uncertain, and conflicted situations of practice. Note, however, that their artistry is a high powered, esoteric variant of the more familiar sorts of competence all of us exhibit every day in countless acts of recognition, judgement, and skilful performance. What is striking about both kinds of competence is that they do not depend on our being able to describe what we know how to do or even to entertain the conscious thought the knowledge our actions reveal. (Schön 1987, p.22)

We would all, no doubt, be able to understand what Schön is saying in terms of our own practical experience. It is possible to recall circumstances when we have been asked to explain something we do and then found that describing why and how is remarkably complicated and yet the action is probably quite simple to perform. Schön compares this to good jazz improvisation or to the medical practitioner who is well on the way to a diagnosis at the first sight of the patient:

> Skilled physicians speak of being able to recognize a particular disease, on occasion, the moment a person afflicted walks into their office. The recognition comes immediately and as a whole, and although the physician may later discover in his [*sic*] examination of the patient a full set of reasons for his diagnosis, he is often unable to say just what clues triggered his immediate judgement. (Schön 1987, p.24)

Schön uses the word 'skilled' to describe the physicians in the quote above. It is more than just skill itself; it is also the experienced practice of skills which leads to this deeply ingrained understanding of what action to take almost at the instant a circumstance demanding such action arises. Schön calls this 'knowing-in-action' which he describes as:

> ... the sorts of know-how we reveal in our intelligent action — publicly observable, physical performances like riding a bicycle

> and private operations like instant analysis of a balance sheet. In both cases, the knowing is *in* the action. We reveal it by our spontaneous, skilful execution of the performance; and we are characteristically unable to make it verbally explicit.
>
> Nevertheless, it is sometimes possible, by observing and reflecting on our actions, to make a description of the tacit knowing implicit in them. Our descriptions are of different kinds, depending on our purposes and the languages of description available to us. We may refer, for example, to the sequences of operations and procedures we execute; the clues we observe and the rules we follow; or the values, strategies, and assumptions that make up our 'theories' of action. (Schön 1987, p.25)

This suggests that due to the ways in which distance-education practitioners work and share their expertise it may be necessary to recognise the ways practitioners create their own theories in action and that those who argue for the *training* of people in distance education cannot expect to be creating or dealing with professionals. Clearly, professional distance educators need education for their profession which recognises the reflexive nature of professional work.

Critical reflection and distance education

Schön's approach to the reflective practitioner, for all its strengths, does generally avoid those broader social, historical and political issues which, as has been argued previously, are the bedrock of distance education. Critical reflection can be seen fulfilling the task of bringing the broader issues to bear on the work of distance education scholars and practitioners.

Critical reflection and its various derivations have become a popular part of the work of many scholars and practitioners in recent years. (See Carr & Kemmis 1986; Fay 1975; Gibson 1986, for reviews of theory and practice.) To some it may be seen as another fad which will disappear with the passage of time; for others it holds the key to empowering, democratic collective practice. Its origins extend from critical theory, hermeneutics and critical social science more generally. It has also extended into what might be called the theorizing of the 'commonsense thinking and doing' of human beings reflected in the pragmatism of people such as Schön (1987). The purpose here is to bring both critical reflection into distance education and distance education into critical reflection. One can argue that this may be extended to include open learning which, in some circumstances, has a more 'critical edge' to its purposes than distance education.

Evans and Nation initiated a debate about critical reflection in distance education and stated that:

> Critical reflection is the process through which human beings use their analytical powers to assess elements of their lives against their explanatory frameworks (theories)...Critical reflection requires that social life be understood as problematic. (1989a, p.10)

Their work was influenced by Giddens who saw that the social sciences had an important contribution to make to contemporary cultures:

> From its first inception in modern times social science has had, and continues to have today, a very far-reaching practical impact upon the social world. It could be argued that the transformative consequences of social science for the social world have been considerably greater than those of the natural sciences for 'their' world. But the practical impact of social science has not been primarily a 'technological' one. It has proceeded by the absorption of social scientific concepts into the social world, of which they have become in some part constitutive. As they become taken over by lay actors and incorporated into the practices of social activity, they of course become familiar elements of social routines. Their originality becomes lost even though when first constructed they might have been brilliantly innovative as anything that has existed in natural science.
>
> If the ideas and knowledge-claims of social science cannot be kept insulated from the social world itself, we reach a new appreciation of the significance of critical theory. Social science does not stand in a neutral relation to the social world, as an instrument of 'technological change'; critique cannot be limited to the criticism of false lay beliefs. The implication ... is that social scientists cannot but be alert to the transformative effects that their concepts and theories might have upon what it is they set out to analyse. Critical theory is not an option for social science, which can either be taken up or left alone; it is inherent in its nature. I do not think any existing versions of critical theory — those associated with the Frankfurt School, for example — can be deemed satisfactory. (Giddens 1987, p.71)

This represents the essence of Giddens's argument in relation to both natural science and to what is known as 'critical theory' – for which several scholars, especially Max Horkheimer and Jurgen Habermas from the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research (the 'Frankfurt School') are key figures. It is important to emphasise Giddens's points and make them clear in relation to distance education. He argues that the impact of social science has been quite profound on the world in which we live, but that the effects are masked by the ways in which they are absorbed into, and become part of, the meaning of social life. Distance education, of course, has played a relatively small part in this process, but, it is important to recognise that the same absorption process applies to its ideas and knowledge-claims: they become embedded in, and constitute, the 'taken-for-granted' theory and practice of distance education. For the purposes here, it is the point that Giddens makes about critical theory which is important: he declares that it is not an option in social science; one may conclude, therefore, that it is not an option for distance education.

Fitzclarence and Kemmis argue that a critical approach to theory and practice in distance education is necessary to redress the social and educational changes embedded through the incursion of communications technology into educational and social practices. From their own experience as distance educators about curriculum theory they write:

> It is inappropriate for distance educators to continue thinking about their curricula and pedagogies in terms of...a form of social life which has been superseded. The challenge now appears to be to find alternative ways to think about the new social contradictions associated with the turn towards the abstract mode of ideational, social and economic exchange...This requires a form of theorizing that views culture in a comprehensive sense... (1989 p.174)

Critical reflection may be seen as an important way to meet the challenge posed by Fitzclarence and Kemmis. Critical reflection builds into the process of reflection a concern for the social in that it seeks to locate the reflection within a broader critical framework with a view to testing out both the theory and the object of reflection and moving toward a better condition of practice. More particularly, critical reflection can be seen as locating reflection within a critical social science or critical theory framework. As one can see from the quotation and discussion of Giddens's ideas previously, there are debates about the nature of what constitutes a critical theory or a critical social science, but for the purposes here, Giddens provides an understanding of the critical nature of social science which is inclusive enough for those critically inclined distance education scholars and practitioners to find a place.

For the critical reflection process to be truly reflexive it needs to affect both theory and practice – some critical theoreticians, such as Habermas argue are theory and practice are inseparable as *praxis* – and to enhance a person's capacity to understand themselves in relation to the object of reflection and its social context. For Habermas, this is being reflexive in terms of *emancipatory interests* because the process contributes to the potential for people to emancipate themselves from the social forces which oppress them (see Habermas 1972; 1974). It is this political, emancipatory condition which provokes much debate about critical theory. It seems that one may argue that critical reflection, when viewed from viewpoint of Giddens may merely verify a particular theory and its related practice, therefore, no change, emancipatory or otherwise, *necessarily* takes place. However, one could conclude that, even in such circumstances, critical reflection has produced a change to the understanding of the theory and a consequential confirmation of the practice which, in itself, represents change.

The essence of critical social science is that the critical reflection process is at the heart of emancipatory practice and, therefore, it should be seen as progress towards people realising their power and control over their own lives. In terms of the argument in this chapter, it is also useful to locate this reflexivity within a critical social science framework which provides a broader foundation for the analysis and development of professional practice in distance education. The subsequent chapters in this book can be seen as examples of practitioners who have done this in their own particular ways and contexts.

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PART TWO

ACCESS AND EQUITY IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

BRUCE KING

PART OF THE CONVENTIONAL wisdom of distance education in Australia is that it is about access and equity. That is, there is a commonsense understanding that the reasons conventional teaching institutions develop distance or external programs are very much to do with enabling students who would otherwise be unable to participate in those programs to do so. Further, there is a strong sense that it is right that the institutions involved make such provision for reasons of fairness within the society. This is not to say that this is the reason, or the major purpose educational institutions have in seeking to enrol distance students. Quite often issues of program or even institutional viability are at stake. But the distance educators, as opposed to those who make policy or determine priorities in the same organisation, tend to subscribe, with varying degrees of sophistication, to such views. This section tests that conventional wisdom.

The chapter by Christopher Newell and Judi Walker seeks to answer the question: Is distance education an 'enabler' in terms of access to and equity within education in Australia for people with disability? It is worth considering what the characteristics of an educational institution might be which would justify the descriptor 'enabler' in this context. Further, are such enabling characteristics general, or specific to particular target groups, for example people with disabilities or those from low socio-economic backgrounds? Would a school or university judged positively in relation to either of these groups be so regarded from a feminist perspective? This paper, 'Disability and distance education', has been prepared jointly by two people with established interest in the area, Christopher Newell and Judi Walker. Christopher, a long-time off-campus student, has a research interest in the area, tutors external students, and has a chronic respiratory disability which severely restricts his physical activity. Judi has a research interest in disability and distance education, practical involvement in the field, and has previously published on related topics.

In 'Gender issues in distance education – a feminist perspective', Margaret Grace addresses the range of issues which would derive from a similar question to that posed above, if it focused on distance education and women. This is also Margaret's research area and she has a background in distance education at university level in Australia both as student advocate and academic.

Both chapters provide comprehensive reviews of the literature in their respective areas of concern. There has been no collaboration between the authors in relation to their contributions to this book. This suggests that, as editors, we saw issues related to gender and students with disability as differing under the umbrella of our general focus on access and equity. You might wish to question this assumption. Should we have more actively sought a general analysis of the nature of disadvantage or the relationship between institutions which have enabling characteristics and distance-education provision in common? Margaret's paper is in the form of a conventional essay, while Judi and Christopher have incorporated Christopher's own experience as a case study which forms a base for the paper and affords a thought-provoking entry into the literature.

Both of the chapters severely test the conventional wisdom, and while affording a measure of support for the general notions presented in the first paragraph, make the complexity of the issues involved and the problematic nature of much distance-education practice abundantly clear. It appears that much of what we do as distance educators makes life more difficult for those whose only access to education is through our provision. This may be very much part of the Australian dual-mode approach to educational delivery but, if true, it suggests that part of our professional role should be a more aggressive advocacy function within our own institutions to defend and advance the unique and critical dimensions of our own practice.

Issues of access and equity have been a significant part of recent Australian Government thinking on higher education, and Judi and Christopher discuss this in relation to people with disabilities in some detail, although Government assumptions are more reflective of an analysis which groups various kinds of disadvantage. The *Report of the Review of Efficiency and Effectiveness in Higher Education* makes the position clear:

> The external mode is an important means of meeting Government objectives in retraining and in providing access to higher education for some disadvantaged groups such as women and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. (CTEC 1986a, p.221)

The link between these general notions of access and equity and distance education was not as explicit in subsequent Government discussion papers and statements of policy as Judi and Christopher make clear, but reappeared in the *A Fair Chance for All* discussion papers from the Commonwealth, (DEET, 1988; 1990) and in the letter from the Department of Employment, Education and Training which invited external studies' providers to bid for designation as national Distance Education Centres (Mullarvey 1988).

As we indicated in the introductory chapter, there is contestation over the nature of distance education and, consequently over the role and force of concepts such as equity within it. One of our colleagues, Ted Nunan, has discussed the nature of this contestation in relation to a project funded through the (then) Tertiary Education Authority of South Australia and undertaken at the (then) South Australian College of Advanced Education the Equity Initiatives Project: External Studies for Women (Nunan 1987).

Nunan provides a quick introduction to liberal and radical conceptions of the critical component of equity in this context – equal opportunity – by citing Jewson and Mason (1986), first in relation to liberal views, 'In principle, equality of opportunity exists when all individuals are enabled freely and equally to compete for social rewards' (p.313). While the radical view is concerned, 'primarily with the outcome of the contest rather than with the rules of the game, with the fairness of the distribution of rewards rather than the fairness of procedures' (p.315) Ted stresses that 'Both conceptions of equal opportunity are held and applied within educational institutions'.

The consequences for practice of these views are significantly different. Those with liberal views believe that there are no grounds for intervention on behalf of students who patently achieve less of the rewards of an education system than others. The reason for this being that such lack of success is not the result of the system but is due to individual or psychological differences between the students. For radicals, however, who see education as a social instrument for allocating rewards on the basis of class, race and gender, it is appropriate to engage in some form of affirmative action to achieve equality of outcome between the two student groups (Nunan 1987). The consequences in action of the two positions are irreconcilable. While the radical view frequently challenges many assumptions within our institutions, it is usually the liberal stance that prevails, because 'reduction of inequality of outcome has to be achieved within a system which is bureaucratic, competitive, and within which fairness of procedure is a prime consideration' (Nunan 1987, p.4).

The authors of the Report of the Equity Initiatives Project were unashamedly feminist and their analysis was as such within the radical tradition. Yet, as Ted Nunan reports, their recommendations can be clearly identified as comprising two groups, those linked to a radical conception of equal opportunities which called for a degree of affirmative action, and others which could be accommodated within a liberal conception. As an example of the former, targets were called for in relation to the percentage of women to be recruited to particular courses, while the latter involved the adjustment of procedures for fairness, such as recommendations for dealing with 'unstated' selection criteria (Nunan 1987; Rainbow 1986). In retrospect, from the perspective of one who was closely associated with the action undertaken as a result of the Report, it would appear that while virtually all recommendations were implemented initially, those within the liberal tradition have had more enduring impact. In part, this was the result of a failure within the College to maintain monitoring procedures for the affirmative action initiatives once the two project officers left the Project.

This discussion of the Equity Initiatives Project has been included for a number of reasons: first, it serves to introduce elements of the contestation which will surround any proposed action involving issues of access and equity; second, it affords a basis for reflecting on the positions taken by our contributors; third, it is a reminder that conventional wisdom needs unpacking; and finally, it suggests that while action is possible even in seriously contested domains, those changes which are at some fundamental level at odds with the ethos of the institution into which they are introduced need monitoring until such time as they are stabilised within routine operations.

When we received the two contributions which comprise the major part of this section, it was fascinating to read them and note the extraordinary number of points they made in common. While it is commonplace for people talking about disadvantaged groups to rattle off a list which includes women, the disabled, Aborigines, ethnic minorities, and the aged (and presumably, for individuals so dealt with to feel frustration at the groups and/or their aggregation), it is remarkable as our authors guide us through the literature to recognise the issues concerning education provision they share.

Commonalities can, of course, be construed simply by the breadth of one's classificatory categories. For example, Christopher and Judi cite Hammer and Shale (1985) who distinguish three types of barrier to higher education: dispositional, situational, and institutional. It is not difficult to create entries under each for almost any distance-education student, which is not to condemn the classification but to make the point that commonalities are usually more interesting as their specificity increases. There are, of course, important issues of a general kind common to both papers, for example the discussion of socially structured forms of disadvantage; the need for educational attainment as an independent source of success for the individual tied to others in most areas of life; the financial problems faced by women and students with disabilities when taking distance courses, and their constrained geographical mobility.

There are ironies, too. Both women and students with disabilities are expected to do more than other students to succeed on distance-education programs. The domestication of women's labour in many societies impinges on their capacity to meet workload expectations when studying (von Prümmer 1987). The outcome for people with disabilities is similar when institutions:

> ... take the normal educational life-span, designed for the individual to learn all that he [*sic*] needs for functioning in life, and expect the disabled person to learn all that and acquire the complex skills necessary to function in a non-handicapped society. Thus far from making provision for our disabled colleagues to have some of the difficulties smoothed out for them, we expect

> them to achieve more than the rest of us in the time allotted. (Hales 1987, p.2)

Perhaps most interesting are some of the points of difference between the two papers. Judi and Christopher write in their introductory paragraphs:

> Another problem concerns the diversity of disability and the tendency to speak and write of people with disabilities as if the defining characteristic is of such importance that other potential descriptors remain insignificant. The disabled 'group' is comprised of individuals with their own unique life history, needs and potential. There is no standard profile of disability. (p.28)

This would appear to be completely at odds with the feminist position that the defining characteristic of experience is gender.

Another point of difference is the individualised nature of much distance learning. Judi and Christopher comment:

> Many features of campus-based learning work against students with disabilities because of the lack of a flexible teaching–learning environment, which in most cases reduces the prospect of individual tuition. The distance–teaching environment is one which can be highly individualised. (p.48)

This contrasts markedly with our other contributor:

> A preference for a less hierarchical, more interactive style of learning and teaching being expressed by women in distance education, both staff and students, is consistent with the model of learning developed by the feminist movement which emphasises small group discussion and consciousness raising. (p.71)

Margaret continues:

> It is quite inconsistent with the dominant pedagogical mode in distance education ... which accords much positive value to the characteristics of independence and autonomy in students. (p.71)

There appears not to be consensus amongst the authorities represented in either paper on the general question of whether distance education is enabling for the group of students concerned. The positive stance taken above in relation to students with disabilities is countered by other authorities who argue that higher education serves a mainly rehabilitative function for people with disabilities and as such, distance education should be eschewed in favour of strategies which allow greater degrees of social interaction (Rees 1981). A stronger view is that distance education reinforces the demeaning aspects of the way society views disability and denies the individuals concerned rights to education on an equal basis with other students. This needs to be set against the official attitudes of Australian institutions which make no distinction between awards achieved on the basis of different delivery modes.

The paper by Margaret reflects a similar ambivalence. Distance education has characteristics of flexibility and convenience which serve women well; it also maintains their domestic ties. While some may not be well-served by a study mode which reinforces social isolation it affords an escape from the power plays of male-dominated teaching situations on campus.

Anwyl, Powles and Patrick (1987) and Anwyl and Powles (1989) have shown us who uses distance education and asked us to consider who should. They recognise the limited success distance-education practitioners have had in realising the 'enabling' potential of their own practice. What is left for you to consider at this point are the barriers, whether societal, institutional or personal, which limit the enabling potential of your own practice. If distance educators actually constrain the educational involvement of people who are obliged to use the distance mode as their only study option, then the conventional wisdom is a destructive myth.

CHAPTER 3

DISABILITY AND DISTANCE EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA

CHRISTOPHER NEWELL AND JUDI WALKER

TOWARDS THE IDENTIFICATION OF CRITICAL ISSUES FOR THE DISTANCE EDUCATOR

THE LINK BETWEEN DISTANCE education and disability has been made at various levels, including governmental, educational and individual, but even though this link has been evident for some time, it is only since the early 1980s that it has developed significance. This chapter attempts a critical appraisal of this link between disability and distance education, seeking an answer to the question: Is distance education the 'enabling factor' in terms of access to and equity within education in Australia for people with disability?

We decided to begin with a case study of a person with a disability and his experience of distance education. While this case study is not typical (whose is?), it does show some of the potential of distance education, some of the difficulties faced by students with disabilities, and it raises critical issues. Above all, it highlights the way in which a person with a disability can use distance education to overcome some of the handicapping aspects of educational and social policy.

A review of the literature proved the most frustrating part in the preparation of this paper. There is an abundance of literature about disability, even more about education, and a growing amount about the relatively new field of distance education. However, there is very little about the three linked together, and what there is, is mostly descriptive, concerned with specific projects (e.g. Crocker 1983; Gough & McBeath 1981; Hosking 1987; Mattock 1987; Ryan 1987; Walker 1989).

One of the problems in a descriptive review of the literature and a case study on issues related to disability and distance education is that some issues which should be highlighted, yet are not related directly to distance education, may have to be overlooked. Another problem concerns the diversity of disability and the tendency to speak and write of people with disabilities as if a defining label is of such importance that other potential descriptors remain insignificant. The disabled 'group' is comprised of individuals with their own unique life history, needs and potential. There is no standard profile of disability. It is important also to avoid oversimplification of the term 'need' as in the nature of needs, except in the most general of senses, between individuals. Disabled Peoples' International (DPI) defines 'disability' and 'handicap' as follows:

> *Disability* is a functional limitation within the individual caused by physical, intellectual, emotional or sensory impairments.
> *Handicap* is a loss or limitation of opportunity to take part in the life of the community on an equal level with others due to physical or social barriers.
>
> Disability has too long been viewed as a problem of the individual and not the relationship between that individual and their environment.

The DPI definition is referred to because this organisation is both for, and representative of, people with disabilities. This chapter aims at reflecting and taking into account the perspectives of people with disabilities.

We were concerned to cover the whole spectrum of disability in relation to distance education, but found that time and space did not permit. Since the case study and most of the literature consulted referred to physical and sensory impairments, and education in the context of higher education, we have limited ourselves to these areas. We acknowledge that intellectual and emotional impairments are just as pertinent, as are the primary and secondary aspects of distance education.

In many respects, the identification of critical issues arising out of the case study and the literature review will depend upon the reader's background. The issues you pick up may be different from the issues identified by us. We, the writers, have differing perspectives, writing styles and life experiences. The most obvious of these is that one of us has a disability and the other one does not. We would like you to reflect, as you read, upon issues *you* see as critical and keep a record of what seem to *you* to be the important issues. We now invite you to read on.

CHRISTOPHER: A CASE STUDY

This is the story of Christopher. It is the tale of one person with a disability and his experience of distance education. This twenty-six year old wears three hats in his involvement with distance education. First, he is a current student, starting his seventh year of full-time study, who has done all his post-secondary education off campus. Secondly, he is undertaking off-campus research for a PhD with Deakin University into technology and disabled people. Thirdly, he is a part-time tutor with the University of Tasmania at their Hobart Study Centre, tutoring external BA students.

Background

Christopher has a severe respiratory disability which takes the form of chronic asthma. He loathes it, however, when people who identify themselves as asthmatic claim to know what his life is like. Quite simply, 'they don't'. He has a chronic condition which severely curtails his mobility and energy. Everyday reality for Christopher consists of carrying a portable oxygen cylinder, frequent use of nebulisation and oxygen therapy, and high doses of drugs (including corticosteroids) which have severe side-effects and are held by some textbooks to be toxic.

Being steroid dependent, he has a depressed immune system and has to steer clear of people with infections. Every day involves a battle to keep going in the face of such experiences (due to his disability, related factors and drug side-effects) as breathlessness, hypertension, tachycardia (a high pulse rate), pain and bleeding into his joints and tissue, high intraocular pressure (affecting his vision), and severe mood swings, to name a few. Perhaps the biggest problem he faces is that he is 'nice', 'normal' and 'natural' looking, not conforming to the stereotypes of disability. This is a key issue for many people with a hidden disability.

Having spent years of his life in hospital, Christopher lives in a specifically modified, low allergenic flat at his family's home in Hobart, where they provide him with personal care and, he hastens to add, 'loving support'.

Socialisation

Christopher did not do well in the final years of his schooling in Brisbane, because he was hardly able to get there. His secondary education was undertaken at 'Churchie' (Anglican Church Grammar School) in Brisbane. From Grade Ten onwards it was a constant battle to attend. He kept pushing himself and kept on having to be admitted to hospital. Eventually he had to give up school and received Sickness Benefits and in due course the Invalid Pension. Christopher also tells of how years of 'doing badly' at school helped him towards a poor self-conception which he is still battling.

However, particularly important in Christopher pursuing tertiary education was his family and schooling background (primary and secondary socialisers). He is the son of an Anglican Priest who is qualified in several disciplines and holds a research degree. His mother, a teacher by training, provides him with the twenty-four hour a day personal care and emotional support service which facilitates his lifestyle. Indeed, Christopher attributes much of the reason for his survival and success to his parents.

Christopher grew up in the suburb of St Lucia, near to the University of Queensland, and recalls that the norm was for people to be graduates and doctors. In addition, at Churchie, most of the Grade Twelves went on to the University of Queensland. To be a graduate was normal. In late 1983, after a couple of years and a change in State when his father became a Bishop, Christopher approached the University of Tasmania, which refused him matriculation despite his 'special circumstances'. He recalls that he knew that it would have been very difficult to attend many lectures, but that he did not consider external study at that time. Indeed, Christopher observes that study with that institution has never been a viable option, despite the fact that he lives two minutes drive from its campus.

Christopher had picked up an Australian guide to tertiary study and found out about the external BA program the (then) TSIT at Launceston was developing. Despair turned to joy and apprehension when the TSIT accepted him and he nervously started his BA by external study in 1984. It was to change his life.

The first degree

Christopher remembers that he had told his Head of School at the TSIT about his disability, but tried to conceal it as much as possible because he did not want special treatment, and was also afraid that lecturers would not want him and would doubt that he could do the work. He only revealed this information if absolutely necessary.

Attendance at his first Study School (a one-day event) was a major achievement. Although an important reason for Christopher enrolling with the TSIT was that his Head of School guaranteed that for most BA courses attendance was not compulsory, he did manage to get to a few lectures. Attendance required an exhausting two-hour journey to Launceston and then home again. The Institute counsellor was a great help (throughout all of his course, recalls Christopher) and arranged for Christopher to use his room to use his oxygen and nebuliser and to lie down and rest.

Then came exams. Christopher observes that 'they were a real ordeal, because a three-hour exam could take most of the day'. Because of his disability, Christopher applied for honorary supervision at home. Whilst getting no extra time, he needed breaks for oxygen and nebulisation therapy, and to rest his body and hands (which become very painful with writing and shake badly at times). He was often hypoxic and exhausted during exams and, hence, relied upon the high marks he got for assignments to get him through course units at a desirable grade. Further, he normally did not get a chance to study much for exams as, by the end of semester, he was usually rushing to catch up missed work. This was and is because every day, week and month, he varies markedly in what he is able to achieve and is constantly working ahead and/or catching up. Christopher recalls that effective curriculum design was important here. It allowed him to identify what he should learn, why and how, and to work at his own pace.

The end of second year saw another crisis. He was unable to finish his Geography major externally with the TSIT and had to enrol with the University of New England, in Armidale. For some time he did not know whether this was a viable option. Most courses had rigid Study School attendance requirements which he would not have been able to meet, let alone afford. Eventually he chose the only two third-year Geography courses which did not have attendance requirements. It was still difficult studying at a distance within an external student population of 6000 when one has special requirements (such as special exam supervision). Further, the cost of telephone calls to Armidale was difficult, as was the cost of returning library books to the University and paying for photocopies of required material at one dollar each request. With the TSIT, Christopher had been accustomed to a greater use of course readers for access to articles, and to being able to request lecturers to ring him back.

Post-graduate life

The end of his BA saw Christopher still 'hungry for learning' and desirous of becoming as well qualified as possible towards securing a future where he could dictate some of the working conditions he needed. He had sent inquiries about external studies around Australia and eventually decided on an MA (Hons) by course work and research in Technology and Social Change with the University of Wollongong. He had become interested in it through his Head of School at the TSIT, who was currently enrolled with Wollongong. The major deciding factor was when the Head of Department at Wollongong agreed to let him be exempted from all attendance requirements.

Hence, 1987 and 1988 saw Christopher enrolled for an MA (Hons) with the University of Wollongong, officially enrolled as a full-time *internal* student. He never got to Wollongong and graduated without meeting his supervisor. They were not, however, oriented towards external study and Christopher had particular problems with the lack of library resources, staff who did not return phone calls, inadequate course work materials, and the cost of telephoning, and posting to Wollongong. Christopher recalls it as a particularly lonely and difficult existence. Despite this he managed to do consistently well in his course work units and to complete his thesis successfully.

By the end of his Master's candidature, Christopher had identified an area which lent itself to PhD research (Technology and People with Disabilities) and looked to be socially relevant. Further, he knew that a doctorate would help him gain the special work environment he required, give him a marketable qualification, and stretch him further in his intellectual development. He also knew that he needed a properly managed and resourced off-campus program, even if he did not do a PhD and opted instead for a specialised Graduate Diploma.

Inquiries revealed either that he would not be allowed to study off campus for a PhD, or that he would be required to meet rigid attendance requirements. An exception to this lay in Deakin University, which had a Social Studies of Science program in its School of Humanities, being similar to the Science and Technology Studies department he was with at

Wollongong. Initial contact with the Graduate Studies office and then his eventual supervisor (who immediately offered to call him back to save him money) was encouraging. The benefits of enrolling with Deakin University included non-compulsory attendance requirements, the Vera White Disability Resource Centre (which has assisted Christopher greatly), an excellent off-campus library service, and friendly staff.

In 1989 Christopher commenced as a full-time off-campus PhD student with Deakin University. Whilst better resourced, he still faces various barriers. These include the financial costs of studying with a disability.

He has never been able to get assistance from the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service for his education, on which he spends most of his pension, a situation which is only possible because he lives with his family. Nor can he take a Scholarship (standards for which are difficult enough for people without disabilities to attain) because he would have to give up the pension and its invaluable fringe benefits. Even with the part-time tutoring he does, his level of income is less than that of most post-graduate students. One should also add to this scenario that, as is widely recognised, people with disabilities incur extra costs due to living with a disability (see for example, Cass *et al.* 1988, p.181). Christopher also observes that, as an external student with a disability, he had to purchase more books and photocopies than most students. He cannot rely on getting to a library, nor upon using loan materials within specified times.

Technology

In July 1989 Christopher was able to visit Deakin University's Geelong campus. A major factor in this was his recent acquisition of a lightweight portable oxygen cylinder which he could recharge himself. Christopher hastens to add that many other factors were just as important. In particular, the Vera White Disability Resource Centre was able to assist with the special arrangements he needed, and arranged for him to speak at a conference of students with disabilities, enabling his fare to be paid. It took him weeks to recover.

Christopher also talks with excitement of a trial arrangement with Deakin University, starting in 1990, whereby he and his supervisor will be able to communicate via the E-Mail network AOLIN. It has the potential to speed communication, cut Christopher's telecommunications and postal costs, and enable him to send or request information from home, rather than having to get to a post box or post office all the time. Talking to distance educators about this project was an interesting experience for Christopher. Several people, especially those who are more 'technology driven' in their research interests, seemed to see this as a great solution to a technical problem. As Bigum (1986, p.180) notes, however, the questions of 'what' and 'why' are just as important in evaluating distance-education services. We should also note that affordable access to a suitable computer and network, and the desire to use such services, are also important social factors.

Upon this theme, Zola (1988a, p.6) notes, 'Faith in the technological fix encourages belief in the fallacy that all problems have a technological solution...'. The dominant ideology in society is that people with a disability (such as Christopher) have an inherent 'problem' which is 'tragic' and 'bad', and should be corrected through a techno-fix. Such a perspective questions the wholeness of people with a disability and neglects the social relations of technology. As Nobel observed:

> Like every other social process, technology is alive. People – particular people in particular places, times, and social contexts – are both the creators of modern technology and the living material of which it is made. (Nobel 1977, p.167)

Distance educationists, in proposing solutions,which involve high-tech gadgets, to handicapping situations will need to remember that social structures, forces and norms are all important. Christopher's continuing use of high-tech solutions will equally depend upon these social factors.

Professional life

During his Masters candidacy, Christopher was approached by the TSIT (now the University of Tasmania) to tutor some of its Hobart external students. This has been an on-going and expanding teaching commitment which he has found rewarding, if exhausting. He is able to use telecommunications (including teletutorials) to do most of the work from home, and finds that his experience of learning at a distance has been particularly useful. He has also found that he can be of particular assistance to students with disabilities. In several instances he has been of help to students in working through seemingly impossible handicapping policies and practices.

Indeed, he has found that students with disabilities can relate particularly well to a member of academic staff who has a personal experience of severe disability and has to overcome handicapping barriers. An interesting claim of Christopher's is that he must be one of only a few tertiary educators who uses oxygen (via nasal prongs) to keep him going whilst teaching. Conversations with his students, who are mostly mature age, reveal that this does not worry them, and that he has developed a good rapport with them.

Christopher hopes to use his education for home-based employment (including consultancy) in either the disability policy field and/or distance education. He aims to use the same media he has come to know in distance education to gain the lifestyle and work where he may work within the circumstances he needs.

Shaping the future

One of Christopher's visions is the use of people with disabilities as experts and professionals in the disability services area, including the planning and management of distance-education programs. Indeed, as Christopher well knows, education can confer a certain amount of control and power in society. Distance education is one potential way that people with disabilities can gain PhDs and go on to professorial rank and, as such, can be a medium for change in social and educational policy.

Further, gaining entrance to degrees confers status and suggests the 'competence' of the holder in professional areas. Such achievement 'can serve as a pathway to success and social mobility', given the stratifying role of education (Edgar 1980, p.184). As Edgar (1980, p.180) also notes, education serves as a cultural reproducer. Yet, it can also equip people with the intellectual tools to question practices and dominant notions which place people with disabilities in a subordinate position in society.

Christopher's case shows how distance education can be used to take some of the handicap out of his life. He still has needless social barriers, yet his education is seen by him to be getting him to the stage where he can help to change the status quo. We invite you, as distance educators concerned with the development of accessible distance-education programs, to reflect upon your pedagogy, the perspectives of people with disabilities, and how your practices fit into Freire's paradigm:

> The pedagogy of the oppressed, as a humanist and libertarian pedagogy, has two distinct stages. In the first, the oppressed unveil the world of oppression and through the praxis commit themselves to its transformation. In the second stage, in which the reality of the oppression has already been transformed, this pedagogy ceases to belong to the oppressed and becomes a pedagogy of all men [*sic*] in the process of permanent liberation. In both stages, it is always through action in depth that the culture of domination is culturally confronted. (Freire 1972, p.31)

This case study is itself radical, since Christopher is one of the writers. Previous accounts of people with disabilities in distance-education literature have been from the perspective of able-bodied professionals writing of the experiences of disabled undergraduates in a detached, often supposedly 'objective', way.

Distance education was and is the best option for Christopher, but not necessarily for all people with disabilities, since some far prefer on-campus attendance. Its potential as a learning medium has still yet to be identified fully for various people with disabilities, such as those with an intellectual disability. No chapter can cover all eventualities. Rather it can assist in the development of a way of thinking which equips the educator with alternative perspective, tools and possibilities.

Please remember that this case study is one person's experience. Treating the handicapping aspects of educational and social practices faced by people with disabilities as private troubles rather than public issues (to use C. Wright Mills' thought) is just another way of repressing such people. With regard to this saga, the comments of Irving Zola (who has a disability) are pertinent. He points to an ideology whereby:

> ... if a Franklin Delano Roosevelt or a Wilma Rudolph could OVERCOME their disability, so could and should all. And if we fail, it's *our* problem, *our* personality, *our* weakness ... our lives or even our adaptions do not centre around one single activity or physical achievement but around many individual and complex ones. Our daily living is not filled with dramatic accomplishments but with mundane ones. And most of all, our physical difficulties are not temporary ones to be overcome once-and-for-all but ones we must face again and again for the rest of our lives. That's what chronic means! (Zola 1988b, p.31)

DISTANCE EDUCATION AND DISABILITY

A critical appraisal of the literature

In light of the potential of distance education raised by the case study, let us examine some of the existing professional literature. In order to reflect upon the link between distance education and disability, this review will take a historical approach, focusing on three interlinking areas:

- attitudes towards and trends within disability groups;
- government and institutional policy;
- the practice of distance education as an 'enabling factor'.

Disability: Attitudes and trends

During the last decade (1980s) a comprehensive foundation has been laid in the human services sector in Australia, mainly as a result of two factors. First, the development of the principle of normalisation by Wolfensberger (1980), and secondly, the release of the *Report of the Handicapped Program Review: New Directions* (1985) and the subsequent introduction of the *Commonwealth Disability Services Act* (1986). What is most significant about these two factors is that they provide a nationally recognised philosophical and procedural framework for the provision of services in this area. Goldsworthy and Hannan (1987) argue that one of the reasons for such a dramatic re-focusing of service delivery modes was the review process itself. They point out that the various sectors of the industry –

consumers, government and voluntary agencies, had never before been consulted 'on the basis of consumer outcomes'. This review process resulted in the establishment of long-term goals and the development of program options based on the aspirations of consumers. Unfortunately, various aspects of the recommendations of *New Directions* have still to eventuate.

These two important factors signal a new approach to disability. Until the 1980s, people with disabilities were consistently denied the right to participate fully in society as free and equal members, with the opportunity to articulate effectively their views on matters concerning them. Inappropriate services had been developed in the name of assisting people with disabilities, which entrenched dependence. People with disabilities were (and in many cases are still) susceptible to socially structured forms of disadvantage. Silver (1987) attributes this to prevalent attitudes, ranging from incomprehension to hostility – the historical legacy is one which shapes prevalent assumptions about people with disabilities as being outside 'normal' society. In addition, people with disabilities do not form a clear, potential political constituency. Rather they are seen as a second order 'problem', categorised with the elderly, the under-paid, prisoners etc. as items in programs of social reform. Many of the inequities outlined above continue today in both government policy and social practices/norms.

One of the main reasons for this situation is that there is a great deal of variety amongst people with disabilities, such as differences in social class, family circumstances and clinical labels and as such there has been little incentive for unified pressure-group action to fight prevalent attitudes. Oliver (1984) draws attention to the fact that many people with disabilities do not necessarily see themselves as disabled, or even if they do, 'would not contemplate joining an organisation for the disabled' (p.23). Borsay (1986) suggests that the medical approach to disability has encouraged artificial divisions amongst people with disabilities. Governments provide services in a way that fosters divisions, such as tax allowances to one category of people with disabilities, but not to another; mobility allowances to those who cannot walk, but not necessarily to those who can; benefits to those injured at work, rather than those with congenital disabilities or road accident-induced disabilities.

The rising affluence of the mid-1960s and 1970s highlighted the fact that a number of groups, including people with disabilities, were not sharing in the social benefits that were being created. Disability organisations tended to be 'competitive' groups whose members shared a common interest, and not, in Cawson's (1982) terms, 'corporate' groups whose members shared a common position within the division of labour. As such they did not have much influence with government (Oliver 1984; Oliver & Zarb 1989). Furthermore, as most of those disability organisations were registered charities, direct and overt political activity for change was not possible. Over the years they had built up credibility with Government, based on history and tradition, but not positions of power (Borsay 1986). This was probably because people with disabilities were not represented by these organisations, as the 'key decision makers are usually salaried professional staff who articulate their own assumptions about the needs of disabled people rather than the needs of disabled people as they themselves express them' (Oliver & Zarb 1989, p.224).

The 1980s saw the establishment of disability pressure groups, such as Disabled Peoples' International (DPI) in 1981, constituting the social basis for new forms of transformative political action or change. The establishment of DPI marked the beginning of a new era for people with disabilities, because for the first time they had a 'voice of our own' across the entire spectrum of disabilities. The objectives and strategies underlying this international movement are clearly defined around the central issues of empowerment and of people with disabilities acting collectively to achieve collective goals.

DPI (Australia) has recognition and some financial support from various State Governments and the Federal Government, and recognition from the major non-government organisations serving the needs of people with disabilities. DPI (Australia) can take much credit for the actuality of the many State and Commonwealth Government enquiries which culminated in the *New Directions* review (1985), and the subsequent Commonwealth Disability Service legislation (1986).

The emergence of a social movement of people with disabilities is not a guarantee of major institutional changes, but if the movement continues to grow locally, its power may be expected to accumulate. 'The more that people with disabilities become integrated into mainstream social institutions, the more their presence may lead to further institutional changes' (Scotch 1988, p.171). This applies to all the issues addressed by disability organisations like DPI (Australia), but particularly to the right to education in ordinary schools, colleges and universities. However, it must be noted that this factor is only one of several addressed by DPI, and is seen by many as quite far down on the list of priorities in the controversial issue of the 'quality of life'.

The relevance of higher education

As far as can be ascertained, there is no literature (published or unpublished) on issues in higher education and disability from a DPI (Australia) perspective, and this includes the link between distance education and disability. In other words, there is no specific DPI policy at this stage, apart from the overall policy of integration and equality in education for people with disabilities. However, in line with the trend evident within disability organisations, the move towards education as an enabler is evident in the more recent literature on issues in education and disability. Weir (1987) in her observations of children in the *Logo* environment, noted that most children with a serious physical disability were functioning below their capacity because of the lack of interactive opportunities in their lives. (The *Logo* System was designed by Seymore Papert (1980) as a 'language for learning', as an accessible way to communicate with the computer.) She sees the enabling function of the computer in education as serving a liberating role, to release severely physically disabled students from the handicapping attitudes of well-meaning teachers who prevent the student from experiencing the learning process by doing everything for them, and inadvertently creating dependency. Rees (1981), writing in the International Year of Disabled Persons, draws attention to the two common important educational objectives. First, to realise students' potential and secondly, to increase their sense of autonomy over their lives. He sees these as a justification for the provision of higher education for people with disabilities. Because a student with a disability is often dependent on others for survival, or comfort, it is even more important that there should be areas of activity in which they are able to operate independently.

People with disabilities experience various limitations which emphasise their dependent status in society, which in turn work to turn disability into handicap. These are the limitations and inconvenience caused by the disability itself and the limitations imposed by society through its attitudes and social policies. Rees sees that one of the responsibilities of higher education could be to counteract these limitations and inconveniences. He considers that it is important to anticipate that students with disabilities are likely to have their aspirations and expectations raised as a result of participation in higher education. This has been the case with Christopher and other people with disabilities. Education can also play an important role in improving the lifestyle of a person with a disability, as is evidenced in the following comments by Vernon Glynn, a counsellor for people with disabilities at the Open University (UK), who has a severe physical disability:

> The point is that the education I have managed to achieve, often through luck, or the efforts of others, has proved the key to my life. Without it I wouldn't be the person I am, for true education helps mould the person, it isn't just a matter of stuffing the facts. I wouldn't have the interests I have. I might not be married. I certainly wouldn't be working now at the Open University. I'd be another half finished person. (Boswell & Wingrove 1978, p.87)

Gough and McBeath (1981) acknowledge the vocational relevance of higher education for people with disabilities. Possession of a higher-education qualification is a convincing demonstration of ability, determination and courage and 'must have more scope for employment than would be the case without it' (p.vii). Their comment is fairly typical and illustrates what has already been noted about stereotyping people with disabilities. Disability is often seen as a 'personal tragedy', to be overcome by a person who has fewer characteristics and abilities ascribed to them than is the case for 'normal' able-bodied people. Many people

Many people who have had a disability for a while will actually hold that their disability is a normal part of their life, and that they are not so much 'brave' or courageous' as getting on with life. The real problems lie in the handicapping social and political environments.

These aspects of the relevance of higher education highlight some of the difficulties faced by people with disabilities in both accessing, and succeeding. Rees (1981, p.176) stresses 'that physical disability may retard the educational process of a disabled child and adolescent so that his/her progress toward attaining tertiary education entrance requirements will be correspondingly harder and more difficult than that encountered by the non-disabled'. This view is supported by Hales (1987) who points out that it is hardly surprising that the percentage of people with disabilities in higher education is so low in comparison with non-disabled when the educational experience for a person with a disability can be desperately slow. In many cases children with disabilities are not facilitated in their entry into adult life by their educational experience – often the reverse, because of the breadth of handicap which must be overcome. 'In other words, we take the normal educational life-span, designed for the individual to learn all that he [*sic*] needs for functioning in life, and expect the disabled person to learn all that and acquire the complex skills necessary to function in a non-handicapped society. Thus far from making provision for our disabled colleagues to have some of the difficulties smoothed out for them, we expect them to achieve more than the rest of us in the time allotted' (p.2). It must also be remembered that in this instance education can teach people with disabilities to have less of an expectation of themselves, compared with others.

Hales suggests that education is not so much an enabling factor as an additional 'handicap'. Students with disabilities should be able to tailor the functioning of the educational process not just the content, to their needs, and so require flexibility on the part of the institution to adjust timetables, to take longer over courses, to take examinations based on assessment of knowledge rather than the ability to be part of the system. (For example, 'what do you know?' and not 'what can you write about it in three hours'.) In this particular paper, Hales is arguing against the present trend towards integration, and does not accept that education, at whatever level, is always 'emancipatory'. Students with disabilities may well be doubly handicapped, once by the disability (he ignores people with several disabilities) which gave trouble in the first place, and once by the effects arising from that disability which often entails a reduced degree of access to education, which in turn produces unequal chances and expectations in wider aspects of life.

Hales perpetuates the 'personal tragedy' theory of disability which is so characteristic of modern Western society where social provisions are organised on the assumption that disability is a personal tragedy (Oliver 1986). Many, particularly in Australia, in the 1990s, would agree. A small, but growing vocal minority challenge the views Hales articulates and state that it is the right of people with disabilities to have the choice to study at higher-education level.

Future trends

What of the future? Perhaps it can be illuminated by looking at the historical processes which have shaped the social construction of disability as a specific category in our society. Finkelstein (1980) presents an evolutionary model based on the level of economic development of particular societies. For Australia this would be seen in terms of Phases One, Two and Three. Phase One corresponds to Australia before the First World War when the economic base was agriculture or small industry. It did not prevent the majority of people with disabilities from participating in the production process, and where they could not participate fully, they were able to contribute. People with disabilities were regarded as individually unfortunate and not segregated from the rest of society. Phase Two roughly corresponds to Australia in an era of expansion, in terms of population, industry and the advent of materialisation, to the 1970s. Many more people with disabilities were excluded from the production process and were regarded as social problems, segregated into institutions and out of the mainstream of social life. Phase Three refers to the kind of society we are currently moving into, which, according to Finkelstein will see the liberation of people with disabilities, largely due to the use of new technologies and the working together of 'professionals' and people with disabilities towards common goals. Of course this is very much over simplifying and over romanticising aspects of the historical process, and there are all kinds of examples which could be cited as contrary to the process. But, it does highlight what several commentators have perceived as the 'liberating' factor for people with disabilities, particularly in regard to access and equity (in all their meanings) in higher education.

David Laycock, the Director of the Computer Centre for the Disabled at the Polytechnic of Central London, and an active member of the National Federation of Access Centres, predicts an 'enormous increase' in the number of people with disabilities applying to enter higher education (in MacGregor 1989). He cites several factors responsible for the already swelling numbers, which are equally applicable in Australia, where the same trend is becoming evident. Equal opportunity legislation and a growing awareness of social responsibilities towards the disadvantaged mean that employers and institutions have a moral, and legal obligation to accept people with disabilities. In theory, educational policies of integration and the closure of special schools, mean that people with disabilities should receive a better secondary education than they have in the past, and tailored towards higher-education requirements. Some consider that the most important factor is the use of the new information technologies and their application in education (Hawkridge 1983; Hawkridge *et al.* 1985; Jones *et al.* 1987). As is shown by Christopher's case study, however, the social relations of technology are as equally important as gadgets by themselves. In addition, the importance of affordable access to technological services is of paramount importance, as was noted with Christopher's case study.

New Information Technology

The decade of the 1980s has seen an increasing application of new technologies to the individual needs of people with disabilities at home, at work and in education (Vincent *et al.* 1989). New information technology has many implications for people with disabilities, regardless of the type of disability. The types of technology in this context include computers, telephone, videodisc, radio, speech synthesiser, computer graphics, real time control systems and various hybrid combinations of these technologies. These new methods of developing and delivering instructional materials are seen as a new model for education and training by writers such as Jones *et al.* (1987).

The California State University, Northridge (CSUN), which has a student population of 30 000, of whom 900 have disabilities, has been serving students with disabilities since it was first established in 1962 (Murphy 1987). One of the new programs at the University is a computer-access laboratory. Carl Brown (1987) who was behind this project, explains how adapted computer technology, known as the 'Californian model' was introduced into a higher-education model. The basic assumption of this model is that students with disabilities are presently, or will become, fully functional members of the community of students on campus. The purpose of the model is to provide functional computer access so that students with disabilities can both fully participate in courses or career paths in which computers play an integral part, and avail themselves of the special benefits provided by computer access to students in general (i.e. word processing, research, computer-assisted instruction, etc.).

The UK Open University adopted a 'Home-Computing Policy' in 1987 whereby the use of a microcomputer would be a major and compulsory component of selected courses (Vincent *et al.* 1989). This had a number of implications of relevance to students with disabilities, both positive and negative. A survey of students with disabilities (Edwards 1988) indicated that the Home-Computing Policy should represent an improvement in their educational and work opportunities, and be in line with the Open University's general policy of developing services for students with disabilities who use technological aids. They employ an external consultant on aids/equipment to support students, especially those with severe physical disabilities, who provides advice on equipment and hardware, specific to their disability.

On the surface, the use of new information technologies in education looks attractive to people with disabilities as a means of access to and success within higher education, and also to acquire new skills. It could be a means to greater autonomy, choice (of topic and medium) and freedom to organise a pattern of learning. These new methods of developing and delivering instructional materials are conducive to use in distance education. However, Hi-Tech gadgets by themselves do not provide 'solutions'. The technology which is used for the education of people with disabilities, either face to face, or at a distance, should be appropriate to differing circumstances such as income, familiarity with, and desire to use, a form of technology, and disability. For example, provision of resources via electronic mail is hardly appropriate either for a person unable to afford the extra phone bills or purchase of a computer, or for someone who would prefer the personal contact associated with a telephone call.

Perceptively, Laycock (in McGregor 1989) warns that opening access to higher education by people with disabilities, will require, as the Californian and Open University models illustrate, far greater flexibility and commitment from institutions than merely altering hours and emphasis to accommodate part-time and more mature-age students. Admission and assessment policies need to be as flexible as possible, with students and potential students made aware that this is a possibility for those who do not fit the 'norm'. User-friendly education is another concept which needs to be developed if the doors are to be opened to people with disabilities. One of the keys to this is support, with academic and administrative staff who are friendly and helpful, from first contact onwards. This is particularly important in distance-education systems where face-to-face contact is limited. The employment of people with disabilities in the area of distance education such as staff development, curriculum design, student support and counselling, academic work and administration is another way of ensuring that programs are as user friendly and practical as possible.

At a workshop on 'Educational access for students with disability' held in Tasmania in November, 1989, the key 'blocks' to access were identified as traditional ideas and attitudes, and lack of money. The key 'blocks' to progress, once the student had gained access, were staff attitudes and access, in all its meanings (Walker 1990). This prompts discussion as to whose responsibility it is to 'unblock' the 'blocks' and make higher education for people with disabilities a real possibility.

Government and institutional policy towards higher education, distance education and disability

Laski (1978) writing about the 'responsibility' of providing higher education for people with disabilities, emphasises the role of legislation in ensuring access to higher education in the United States of America by people with disabilities. Laski's paper is a fascinating commentary on the process of interpretation, testing and implementation of legislation in the quest for the realisation of the right to higher education. Under United States legislation, all institutions or organisations which receive Federal funds must provide services to people with disabilities. Because these services are required by law, they are state funded. Laski cites court cases interpreting the legislation and defining the obligations of recipients of Federal funds.

In Australia, there is no such legislation. Nor is there any coherent program yet at the national level which provides for higher educational access for people with disabilities on a long-term *funded* basis. The issues of 'equity' and 'access' in the context of higher education have become familiar words only in the last decade. The situation is reflected in the various short-term trial disability projects which have been funded through the higher-education equity program. Once government money runs out, it is difficult for educational institutions, especially those without policy commitment to students with disabilities, to maintain the program. However, the commitment, in 1989, by the Federal Government to develop a national statement of objectives and undertake the coordination of national action to promote equity in higher education is the first positive sign of the possibility for people with disabilities to have the same opportunity to participate in higher education as people without disabilities. Will the rhetoric be matched by appropriate funding and policies?

Link between distance education and disability

Karmel (1973) was the first, in an official report, to recognise that distance education at the higher-education level, may have something to offer people with disabilities. Compared with earlier reports into external studies in Australia (Martin 1964; Murray 1957), the attitude, in this report, towards formal study in a non-traditional setting, is refreshingly different. A non-compulsory higher education is no longer a preparation for life, but 'integral with life itself'; difficulties with school leavers are reduced by allowing easy access later on; a broadening of the notion of costs to include social costs, is considered; the cost advantages of part-time study are recognised; and, it is suggested that priority should not be given to academically marginal school leavers, but to strongly motivated mature adults 'with lesser formal qualifications'. In addition:

> Even if a student is located conveniently to a tertiary institution and the tertiary institution provides opportunities for part-time study, he or she may be unable to attend for a variety of reasons, for example, because of physical handicap or for some domestic reasons, as in the case of many housewives with young children. (Karmel 1973, p.14)

Anwyl, Powles and Patrick (1987) suggested that the 'physically handicapped', along with other minority disadvantaged groups, were an example of how Braithwaite's (1980) principle of 'greater eligibility' might be applied. This principle, originally applied to prisoners, states that multiple-disadvantaged groups should have been given advantage to acquire education and skills which they have been by and large denied by their circumstances. This principle could be applied to people with disabilities, single parents, shift workers as well as prisoners and others, to whom distance education may be the only feasible option (CTEC 1986c). Anwyl *et al.* (1987) conclude that distance education in the higher-education context caters for a minority of well-qualified adults, only a minority of whom could be considered educationally disadvantaged, but that the potential is there to expand this group. The concept of targeting the educationally disadvantaged, and categorising them into specific representative groupings, including those with disabilities, becomes more and more apparent from this time. Ramsey (1987) introduces the (then) Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission's (CTEC) 'Hit List' (his words) in order to increase participation in post-compulsory education and this trend is not limited to distance education, but includes campus-based education as well. In fact, the Dawkins Green and White papers on higher education (1987, 1988) do not link access and equity policy with distance education. This link does not re-emerge, officially, until the 1990 discussion paper *A Fair Chance for All*, which lists 'promotion of distance education opportunities' as one of six strategies to achieve the overall objective of increasing participation in higher education for people with disabilities (DEET, 1990 pp.39–40).

Official reports

Very little has been documented about the problems and needs of the few students with disabilities who have been able to overcome the barriers and pursue a higher education in Australia either on or off campus. Prior to the 1980s, only one official report has surfaced (Beasley & Glencross 1977). Analysis of this report (and its References) reveals that the approach to disability and higher education was very much along the lines of the 'medical model', but that winds of change were in the air. The authors were concerned that the majority of higher-education institutions surveyed had no defined policy with regard to students with disabilities, and as a result, lacked the mechanisms to identify problem areas, to communicate the information to appropriate sections, to respond to the identified problems, and to evaluate the effectiveness of the responses. They came up with twelve far-sighted implications (which they hesitated to call recommendations), including the need for 'further investigations into the questions of the educational opportunities at all levels for handicapped persons to be undertaken as soon as possible' (p.86). It is worth emphasising that this report was written in 1977.

At the beginning of the 1980s, the Federal Government urged academic institutions to increase participation rates, diversify their programs, and provide greater flexibility (Ross 1981). Birrel (1981) emphasised the appeal of higher education to minority groups, in offering avenues to credentials which are widely valued and can counteract any particular characteristic of a person (such as disability) which is devalued by society in general. Some (e.g. Barker 1981) prescribed issues for the 1980s, recognising that social values were changing and that new information technology could revolutionise society with great implications for post-secondary education, and urged Government to respond. The International Year of Disabled Persons (IYDP) in 1981 engendered much debate and highlighted needs, problems and aspirations of people with disabilities, particularly in the area of higher education. A survey by Roger Rees (1981) took an optimistic tone and concentrated on what could be done to help students with disabilities succeed, rather than highlight the problems. Emphasis was placed on changing traditional attitudes, recognising the distinct learning needs of people with disabilities, downplaying the traditional 'gripe' of architectural access as a major barrier to access and identification of the social implications of disability.

Other reports were beginning to respond to the changing attitudes towards disability, especially in higher education, and to take up the challenge. Higher education, especially through distance learning was widening its doors in terms of entry requirements and diversity of offerings. Richard Johnson's (1983) report into the provision of external studies in Australian higher education emphasised that 'the greater flexibility inherent in external study is a powerful reason for its popularity; it is an alternative, not merely a substitute form of education' (p.16). Calls for national policy on external study, sharing of facilities, interactive use of new technologies, coordination of research, coordination of counselling and support systems, were all aspects which had potential to widen access to potential students with disabilities. 'Equity' and 'efficiency' goals became the buzz words and conferences were held to assess the factors, financial or otherwise, affecting people's ability to undertake and succeed in post-compulsory education. A lot of talking was going on, and in some higher-education institutions, active steps were being taken to encourage and assist students with disabilities. At Deakin University, the Vera White Disability Resource Centre, which was established in 1980 as a research project to look at the feasibility of extending the off-campus program to include students who needed to receive material in taped format, had, by 1985, extended access to other than print-handicapped people who were not able to participate in the traditional learning mode. In 1981, eight students used the Centre's facilities; by 1985, one hundred and eighty (VWDRC 1986). At the (then) Tasmanian College of Advanced Education in Launceston, a substantial report, *Access for the Handicapped* (Hannan 1984) was prepared, but it did not result in specific policy on access and disability, which situation had been recommended in the Beasley and Glencross report (1977). Other similar examples could be cited.

A comprehensive report by Ashby, Taylor and Robinson (1985), *Assistance for Disabled Students in Post-secondary Education: Perceptions, Needs and Responses*, provides insight into what was really happening on the Australian campuses regarding access and equity for students with disabilities by the mid-1980s. This report looked at the needs of, and forms of assistance available to, students with disabilities enrolled in University, CAE and TAFE courses in Brisbane, Sydney, the north coast of New South Wales and the New England area. Contacts were made, and discussions held, with major organisations representing the interests of people with disabilities as well as the academic institutions. Of the conclusions drawn, some emphasised points made in other reports, but others take a new direction. The authors stress that:

- variability exists between individuals with disabilities because of different forms and levels of disability and extensive variation of handicapping effects of even similar terms and level of disability;
- as such, generalisations in policy may be in conflict with a requirement to respond flexibly to the needs of small numbers of individuals, each with widely varying needs;
- in order to reduce the handicapping effects of disability, students commonly incur types and levels of expenditure not faced by students without disabilities.
- Commonwealth sources of funding are limited either to an Invalid Pension (must be at least 85% permanently disabled or permanently blind), or Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service Program (education for vocation and rehabilitation – limited).

The report lays emphasis on the need for the Commonwealth Department of Education to develop a policy which responds to the needs highlighted above, and the need for a program of general *financial* support for participation in educational activities. Perhaps the most pertinent of the conclusions drawn by Ashby, Taylor and Robinson (1985) is that the post-secondary education needs of people with disabilities have fallen between the provinces of departments and statutory agencies. They cite as an example the fact that neither the Commonwealth Department of Education nor the (then) Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission (CTEC), had developed policies and provided funding for the post-secondary sectors which would complement the State Departments and the Commonwealth Schools Commission. In addition those departments concerned with social welfare matters, namely Social Security and Community Services, had apparently not developed specific policies in regard to questions concerned with education as distinct from training (p.54). Such lack of coordinated disability policy is the constant lot of people with disabilities.

One other aspect of the report which must be mentioned, and which verifies inferences already drawn in this review, is that the authors came to the conclusion that few tertiary institutions actively sought to encourage the participation of people with disabilities in their courses, and that more emphasis should be placed on promoting participation. However, they stress that 'before such publicising is entertained greater consideration must be given to specifying the responsibilities which an education institution has on accepting the enrolment of a student with a disabling condition' (p.57).

These are the issues which are being taken up in the 1990s by various committees of individuals from tertiary education institutions, government departments and agencies, which have been formed in most states to promote access and equity in tertiary education for people with disabilities (Walker 1990). These committees include people with disabilities, and are beginning to redress valid criticisms of the status quo raised by groups such as DPI, that many organisations which profess to represent people with disabilities, do not truly act as their voice.

Discussion papers

During 1986 and 1987, the Commonwealth Department of Education concentrated on developing discussion papers on issues and possibilities in various aspects of higher education, including distance education(Anwyl *et al.* 1987; Ashenden 1987; CTEC 1986a, 1986b, 1986c; Dawkins 1987). The emphasis was on promoting growth in the higher-education system 'in a manner consistent with our economic, social and cultural needs' (Dawkins 1987,p.2). In the climate of financial restraint the stress was on efficiency and effectiveness. This would entail management and structural change and a more unified national system of higher education, with fewer, but larger institutions, competing for funds. In fact the various discussion papers, culminating in the Green Paper, were proposing large-scale policy re-orientations, 'the reconceptualisation of tertiary education' (Aitkin 1988). The implications for these trends on minority groups appeared favourable, with phrases like '... increased adult participation in higher education, an expansion of access to those groups which have not traditionally participated in higher education, and improvements in student progress and graduation rates' (Dawkins 1987, p.2).

There was much discussion, as intended, on the various issues raised in these papers, particularly the Green Paper, and at all levels. One of the challenges was (in line with changes evident in Human Services legislation, such as the Disabilities Services Act) to change social goals, highlighted by moves to implement a policy of social justice which focuses on fairness in the distribution of economic and social resources, access to services and opportunities for participation (Browne 1988). The culmination of these discussion papers was the White Paper, *Higher Education: A Policy Statement*, released in July 1988.

While the White Paper announced its commitment to improving access to and success in higher education, and targeted people with physical disabilities, it did not make specific reference to distance education as one of the means by which to achieve this goal. However, it indicated that it would develop a national statement of objectives and undertook the coordination of national action to promote equity in higher education with improved outcomes for all Australians. As a result the National Board of Employment, Education and Training (NBEET) and the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) produced a draft discussion paper, *A Fair Chance for All: National and Institutional Planning for Equity in Higher Education* (DEET, 1988; see also DEET, 1990). The aim of this paper was the wider discussion of higher-education equity issues and the systematic implementation by institutions of policies and strategies designed to improve equity in higher education. People with disabilities are one group of six identified as disadvantaged. The paper lays down strategies for institutions to adopt in their planning, and outlines both federal and institutional responsibilities. One of the six strategies outlined to achieve equity objectives and targets for people with disabilities, is 'promotion of distance-education opportunities'. The Federal Government is putting the onus on individual institutions to develop an educational profile, which includes articulation of equity goals, priorities and measures of performance, as a basis for planning and funding arrangements between the institution and the government. Given the historical lack of provision for people with disabilities in tertiary institutions, this could make it difficult for these institutions suddenly to propose appropriate policy which is sensitive to disability issues.

Distance education as an 'enabler'

Anwyl *et al.* (1987) conclude that distance education is a means of increasing access to higher education for disadvantaged groups and, as has been shown, this has been taken up by the Federal Government. It is not a new idea. Some of the earlier literature which discuss the functions of distance education came to the same conclusion (e.g. Houle 1973; Kaye & Rumble 1981; Sewart *et al.* 1983). Gough (1984), discussing a philosophy of distance education, stressed that a critical point is the principle of equal opportunity, and 'the important thing is the philosophy advocating the widest degree of access and choice for the distance student' (p. 23).

The appeal of distance education specifically for people with disabilities has been documented by a few writers (including Crocker 1983; Gough 1984; Mattock 1987; Vincent 1987; Walker 1989). On the one hand they see distance education as important for many whose attendance at a conventional higher-education institution is not possible, either because of their disability or for reasons shared with non-disabled people. Many features of campus-based learning work against students with disabilities because of the lack of a flexible teaching–learning environment, which in most cases reduce the prospect of individual tuition. The distance-teaching environment is one which can be highly individualised.

On the other hand, there are those who advocate the main function of higher education for people with disabilities as rehabilitative, with social interaction as the most important component (Rees 1981). Distance education is seen as the 'easy' option, a way of further categorising disability in a demeaning way, and denying the individual the right to education on an equal basis (Strochnetter 1988; Walker 1990). Much is said about the negative aspects of distance education for students with disabilities, but very little has been written about them.

Every learning situation has both advantages and disadvantages. The widespread assumption that a face-to-face learning situation between learner and teacher is the fundamental and most effective model is not valid. In the same way, the separation of teacher and learner, and institution and learner poses special difficulties (Rothwell & Geddes 1987). The needs of students, either with or without disabilities, are various and depend on the discipline studied as well as individual circumstances. Acquiring knowledge, using it; acquiring skills, using them; developing attitudes and values; social interaction; self reliance, are all needs which may be important.

Communication media

In the issue of distance education as an enabling factor for people with disabilities, the communication medium used could be the deciding factor in a potential student's decision to study at a distance, or even to study at all. Kaye (1981a) identifies four basic categories of media used in distance education: print, audio-visual, practical activities and interpersonal activities. He presents brief checklists to summarise the individual features of these categories relating to pedagogical and motivational functions, plus some of their key demand, utilisation and production characteristics (pp.51–5). He emphasises that 'the question of media choice is only relevant when a project has the good fortune to be able to use several different media, each accessible to the students, and within the project's budget' (p.49). The reorganisation in May, 1989, by the Australian Government of its higher distance-education delivery system into eight distance-education centres has the potential to reduce duplication and improve the overall quality, availability and efficiency of distance-education courses including the use of several different media (Mullarvey 1988).

In the 1970s and 1980s, print dominated, the effectiveness of which depended on expert preparation and curriculum development (CTEC 1983). The result has been a great variety of distance-learning material in print which has been, very often, the only means of learning available to many non-print-handicapped students with disabilities. Often adaptions have had to be made for these students in terms of comb binding books so that they lie flat, or enlarging print (Walker 1987, 1989). Materials in print form may provide the student with an opportunity to work at their own pace, and give reinforcement in terms of self-assessment questions and written feedback from tutors.

Audio-visual material, including slides, film, video disc, audiocassette, pictures, diagrams, radio and TV broadcasts, telecommunications and computer technology (the last two are not included in Kaye's list), is often used to complement print material and to stimulate a student's interest. It represents an important factor in allowing students to control their learning. With the current application of new technologies to distance education the scope has been widened considerably. Print-handicapped students have found the means to tertiary study through extensive use of audio tapes. Gough and McBeath (1981), and Crocker (1983) describe the establishment of the Vera White Disability Resource Centre at Deakin University, which began its activities transforming study materials for use by visually impaired students. This has had significant implications for other print-handicapped students. Hosking (1987) describes the Print-Handicapped Project at the (then) Warrnambool Institute of Advanced Education (now Deakin University, Warrnambool), which in 1989 offered twelve units, available in a combination of audio, large print or tactile materials, whichever is the most appropriate for the particular student. A major breakthrough has been the development of the 'Quadmaster' unit, a non-manually operated remote control unit designed to provide people lacking manual dexterity with access to continuous play of all audio materials recorded on standard cassettes (Hosking 1988). Walker (1990) describes how the (then) Tasmanian State Institute of Technology's Target '89 project team have transferred audiocassette recordings onto video cassette, operated by a remote control device, for use by students without manual dexterity.

Telephone communication is used extensively in distance education to provide support for students, both as one-to-one support between student and lecturer, and for telephone tutorials. Much has been written on aspects of telecommunication and information technologies in distance education, the more recent including, Robertson (1987), Lundin (1988), Mitchell and Harrington (1988), Walker (1988), Wilkin, (1989). Ryan (1987) describe a telelink project conducted by the Association for the Blind in Melbourne using braille and audiocassette for a more educationally oriented use of multi-point telephone link up.

Computer technology has also provided opportunities for distance students, including those with disabilities. Frost (1989) claims that the difficulties of distance education are largely based on problems associated with traditional means of communication between student and lecturer – the letter and the telephone, in terms of poor time responsiveness. He describes electronic communications facilities and their method of usage for both routine correspondence and assignment submission. Vincent *et al.* (1989) have been studying, for several years, the problems and opportunities which computers have brought to students with disabilities. The UK Open University's Home-Computing Policy (Edwards 1988) represents an improvement in the position of students with disabilities, implying that they will be able to work with greater independence from home. While warning of the initial cost implications, he concludes that 'it is already clear that students with disabilities will be significantly disadvantaged if they are denied access to information technology' (p.80). Technology has a real contribution to make to the education of learners with disabilities. It has the potential to increase their quality of life and independence in two ways, by minimising the impact of disability and by minimising the handicap resulting from the disability. In the same way, technology is an important element in the educational process, as it can provide the physical means by which the level of functional ability is raised (Mattock 1988). However, as has already been pointed out high-tech gadgets by themselves do not provide solutions.

The other two of the four basic categories of media as summarised by Kaye (1981a), practical activities and inter-personal activities, emphasise self-paced learning and self-directed learning. They also personalise the distance-teaching system, and provide local support networks, all of which could be important to a student with a disability. Some higher-education students with disabilities are disabled as a result of an accident sustained in adulthood, and adult learners come with experience which is a rich resource for further learning. Adult learners have already developed ways of focusing on, taking in and processing information. Knowles (1984) identifies three critical features of adult learning: first, the deep need to take responsibility for one's own learning, that is self-directed learning; secondly, adult experiences as a rich resource for learning; and thirdly, learning how to learn without becoming dependent on the lecturer, that is experiential as opposed to transmittal learning. These features are even more pertinent to an adult learner with a disability, accident sustained or otherwise, particularly if the higher-education experience is of a rehabilitative nature.

Moore (1983b) concludes that self-directed learning 'fits' in very well in distance education, but Willen (1984) disagrees. She sees the role of the learner as being one of the most important differences between self-directed learning and distance education. She argues that distance education is always planned, controlled and organised by the educational organisation, whereas in self-directed learning, the learner has full control over the learning situation. However, she opines that 'a good and fruitful alternative can be to turn our attention to an analysis which tries to explore how today's knowledge about self-directed learning can help us develop distance education in a useful direction, both for students and the organisations' (p.13). The trend in Australian higher education towards extended campus systems, employing innovative distance-learning materials and methods and using them in both on-campus and off-campus situations could help realise Willen's aim, and bring the 'best of both worlds' within the reach of students with severe physical disabilities. Many aspects of distance-education learning emphasise self-directed, independent learning, which is very much in tune with present notions of normalisation and self-help for people with disabilities.

Specific project

Distance education has, over the past decade, established considerable credibility as a means of access to higher education, and as such it has provided an opportunity to many people who, by situation or choice, would otherwise not be able to participate. Efforts have been made in several institutions to extend the distance-education system already established in order to provide access for students with disabilities. Most of the literature in Australia about distance education, in the higher-education context, and disability, is of a descriptive nature, looking at various projects designed to do this. While many of the conclusions drawn are similar, there are some important aspects to highlight.

Gough and McBeath (1981) emphasise, in their evaluation of the disabled students learning project at Deakin University, that while it is quite possible to modify successfully course materials for students with disabilities, providing educational opportunities for people with a severe disability 'is an extremely demanding task'. In most higher-education institutions there are some students with severe disabilities and much of the assistance they receive is generated on a personalised basis. Most such students tend to be highly motivated and cope extremely well with the demands placed on them. 'However, if the severely disabled are to enjoy "equal opportunity" ... it is necessary to develop more substantial and sustained support systems' (p.43). Gough and McBeath acknowledge that this will involve additional costs and suggest that it would be more effective for a few institutions to concentrate on building up a major resource centre than for all institutions to try to do so.

Crocker (1983) agrees and concludes his description of the establishment of the Vera White Disability Resource Centre at Deakin University with a list of four important factors:

- support for students with disabilities is more critical than for other students in a distance-education program;
- support needs to be extended into aspects of the student's life situation;
- liaison with academic staff is essential;
- provision of support to students with disabilities requires a high staff level, is more person intensive and requires high level of skill.

This discussion prompts the comment that there is the potential for certain aspects of support for students with disability to become another form of control. There are already instances of individuals involved in providing educational support services for people with disabilities deciding that they know more about the requirements and aspirations of a particular student than the student does. This can be demeaning and ignores the fact that the social situation and implications of people's disabilities differ markedly from person to person. Just as people with disabilities have questioned the needless control over their lives by the medical profession, so too would such criticism apply to excessive control exercised in the name of 'professionalism'.

With this in mind, Walker (1990) advocates a 'low-key' integrated approach when describing the infrastructure set up at the Tasmanian State

Institute of Technology, designed to ease access to and provide support within that institution. The structure (on and off campus) involves:

- appointment of an appropriate person (preferably with a disability) as Disability Liaison Representative in each teaching school;
- dispatch of voluntary disclosure forms to all students on acceptance of a place;
- confidential dispatch of any returns to the appropriate liaison representative;
- negotiation between the liaison representative and the student;
- appropriate action where necessary.

The design of the model emphasises the philosophy that students with special needs (and this is not limited to disability) should have control over their education and articulate their views on matters which concern them. The liaison representative's role is to negotiate with the individual student and the teaching school, and to provide an information base – not to act on behalf of that student.

Mattock (1987) justifies using distance-education methods in the Broken Hill Project for hearing-impaired adults because of the need to expand access to adult-education programs for specific populations, such as those with hearing impairments. Distance education allows for individualisation of programs for specific populations, and the existing technology allows for better access and can be cost effective when considering geographical and physical isolation factors.

Hosking (1987) looks at the ways of extending opportunities in distance education to print-handicapped students in terms of selecting the most effective media and the ways in which materials incorporating those media could be developed. He also looks at the needs of print-handicapped students, and concludes that besides the necessary equipment (four-track cassette recorders), motivation and time, each student needs to determine the best method of presenting assignments and preparing examination scripts, which in most cases requires specialised high-tech equipment. Hosking is very optimistic about the future in this regard, with the development of low-cost scanners, the use of 'swell' ink in conjunction with laser printers, improved quality of speech synthesisers and voice recognition systems.

Ryan (1987) describes a learning by listening project for sight-impaired students using teleconference and audio tape facilities. She highlights a problem which is common both to students with a disability and those without, but perhaps emphasised for the former – that many adults who have not been in a formal education system for a number of years, prefer a 'structured' teaching approach, and are not ready to learn independently without the relevant information and method.

Cost factors

The common threads in these descriptions revolve around cost factors, resources and individualisation. Costs are a big factor. Many people with disabilities are on low incomes and incur extra costs due to their disability and study requirements. Sensitivity to the barriers associated with mailing, photocopying and telephone costs is needed in planning services and schedules. Issues such as the affordable provision of attendant and personal care must be taken into account when planning study schools and making application for funding from government departments. There is no doubt that the effective provision of distance education for people with disabilities requires additional resources in terms of materials, time and resources. The question arises as to whether it would be more efficient to limit the provision of special disability support services for people with disabilities to selected Distance Education Centres. We argue against this proposition. First, this could create a disproportionate balance of disabled and non-disabled in the student population, creating the type of special situation which people with disabilities argue against. Secondly, it has all the attendant problems of centralisation of services. Thirdly, it would deny people with disabilities the opportunity to study with an institution in their own state or territory where there is a realistic chance of at least some on-campus attendance. Finally, it should be observed that, historically, some people with severe disabilities have benefited, as have other students, from studying with smaller institutions where there is more personal interest in individuals. This runs contrary to the current trends in the provision of higher education in Australia.

These, and other points are highlighted by Walker in various papers (1987, 1989, 1990). In a case study of Mark and his experience as a distance learner as a person with quadriplegia, Walker stresses that he should not be seen as a model or prototype, and that each individual has specific needs.

> Mark's venture into distance education, where the convenience of learning at one's own pace was possible, provides insight into one person's experience as a distance learner in an abnormal situation, where conventional education was impossible. However, higher education, whether using distance or conventional means would not be possible for someone in Mark's situation, without support, planning and financial assistance (Walker 1989, p.296).

Conclusion

Hammer and Shale (1985) distinguish three types of barrier to higher education:

- dispositional – i.e. those in the learner's domain (e.g. poor health, disability);

- situational – including distance from an appropriate post-secondary institution, fatigue, family responsibility;
- institutional – in the domain of the institution, including entry requirements, course offerings, timetables etc.

All three of these types of barriers to higher education exist for people with disabilities. Distance education, in the context of an enabler, is another dimension of education which makes its contribution in a variety of ways and extends the existing modes to overcome various kinds of disadvantage. It presents the means to contribute to the equitable provision of education, and to reduce barriers to study. Now the Federal Government in Australia has decided to target people with disabilities in terms of access to higher education, for whatever reason (Rumble 1989a), and has formally suggested the link between distance education and disability, there is a real potential to increase access and participation opportunities to people with disability. However, until government and educational institutions decide whose responsibility it is to provide funds and where those funds are coming from, it makes a mockery of going through the motions of designing and implementing policies to ensure access to and equity within education, at whatever level. Until people without a disability realise that all people have the right to education, regardless of circumstance or situation, discussion of distance education as an enabler for people with disabilities, is limited.

Some of the literature discussed and Christopher's case study show aspects of the potential distance education has in enabling people with disabilities to overcome needless societal and governmental handicaps.

CHAPTER 4

GENDER ISSUES IN DISTANCE EDUCATION – A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

MARGARET GRACE

INTRODUCTION:
WHAT IS GENDER, AND IS IT AN ISSUE?

THE TERM 'GENDER' AS used here refers to the socially and culturally constructed features of femininity and masculinity as distinct from 'sex', which refers to biological attributes (Evans 1988, p.3). The word 'feminist' is used to refer to the ideas and literature emanating from the women's movement, and to indicate a certain critical and female-oriented position in relation to 'normal' social reality. The use of the term in such a general sense is not to suggest that feminism and the women's movement are without internal division, but rather to affirm female experience as a distinct and valuable socially defined reality.

By definition, gender issues, of course, relate to both male and female experience, but this essay is actually more about the women in distance education than about the men. The reasons for such apparent bias can be understood by reference to the work of Spender (1981, 1982) on the effects of the 'invisibility' of women in the education system, and Porter (1986), who describes the task of conceptualising gender in education as a matter of 'making women visible'. Briefly, Spender's (1981, 1982) argument is based on the premise that knowledge is socially constructed, and that women have been excluded from the processes of construction and codification. She says that education systems, for example, are characterised and shaped by a pervasive patriarchal paradigm, and the knowledge they disseminate is a partial, one-sided representation of reality. However, this fact is not generally recognised, because the distinct character of women's experience of the world is not acknowledged or positively valued. Rather, the knowledge produced by men is presented as universal, or neutral in respect to gender. In effect, therefore, the experiential reality of women disappears because the male is treated as the norm:

> Most of the knowledge produced in our society has been produced by men; they have usually generated the explanations and the schemata and have then checked with each other and vouched for the accuracy and adequacy of their view of the world. They have created men's studies (the academic curriculum), for, by not acknowledging that they are presenting only the explanations of men, they have 'passed off' this knowledge as human knowledge. Women have been excluded as the producers of knowledge and as the subjects of knowledge, for men have often made their own knowledge and their own sex representative of humanity...
>
> Fundamental to feminism is the premise that women have been 'left out' of codified knowledge; where men have formulated explanations in relation to themselves, they have generally either rendered women invisible or classified them as deviant. (Spender 1981, pp.1–2)

The androcentric character of the distance-education literature

The few feminists who have reviewed the literature of distance education from a gender-conscious perspective (Burge & Lenskyj 1990; Carl 1988; Faith & Coulter 1988; Matiru & Gachuhi 1988) comment on the invisibility of women and deplore the fact that the growing interest in gender issues in education appears to have been ignored in this field until the mid-1980s. In her introduction to Faith's (1988a) volume *Towards New Horizons for Women in Distance Education*, Burge (1988) likens the publication of the book to lighting a candle in the dark, while Faith and Coulter observe that:

> The growing body of scholarship on women's education ... has not generally considered distance education. This fact, coupled with the lack of an empirical knowledge base regarding women's experiences in distance education has facilitated a tendency to ignore women's concerns and to downplay the specificity of women's needs relative to course development and delivery and to academic policy decisions. (Faith & Coulter 1988, p.195)

For feminist academics, especially those working in literary and artistic disciplines, the literature can be quite alienating, being largely concerned with administrative issues, discussion of electronic technology and its applications, and instrumental approaches to learning theory:

> When I approach the distance-education literature, why am I confronted by bureaucratic history and brochures of electronic whizzery? Why is that most problematic of issues, the teacher/student relationship, addressed in the main by Telecom, and discussion of learning bristling with behaviourist categories and reduced to statistics? Most of all, for a discipline like mine – women's studies, peripheral and revisionist by definition – will any of these experiences, definitions, processes, be appropriate? (Cook 1989, pp.25–6)

The experience of researching for this essay has endorsed these views, and validated Spender's theory. An initial request for a library search produced little more than an apologetic note from a reference librarian on the dearth of material. Further careful perusal of the relevant journals revealed that, apart from a handful of articles which specifically address gender issues and Faith's (1988a) trailblazing volume, the literature conforms remarkably closely to the male-centred model described by Spender. The following illustrative examples are quoted as representative of the norm, not because they are especially extreme.

Hiola and Moss (1989) present tutors' perspectives on the topic of tutorial provision at the Universitas Terbuka (Indonesia). The authors mention that only five of the fifty tutors surveyed were female, but make no comment on this gender imbalance. Furthermore, age and experience, but not gender, are mentioned as significant factors affecting the behaviour of tutors. Choo (1981) presents the results of a study of the clientele of the off-campus academic program of the Universiti Sains Malaysia. The study purports to gauge student attitudes, but none of the results presented are analysed by gender. Nor is the reader apprised of the fact that women comprise only 20% of the student clientele. Is this fact not considered significant? Is the reader to assume that the attitudes of female students are the same as those of males, or are the attitudes of the female minority simply not interesting enough to warrant separate consideration? The same kind of assumptions seem to underlie Herrmann's (1988) 'Conceptual framework for understanding the transitions in perceptions of external students'. This framework is developed from interviews conducted with a sample of 25 students. On the second page the author mentions, without further comment, that: 'All interviewees were in the Electrical or Mechanical Engineering Departments and no women were represented, as at that stage none was enrolled in those areas'.

One can only assume, from the tenor of the rest of the article, that the fact that the results represent only male experience is not seen as significant or prejudicial to the validity and general applicability of the conceptual framework. Such research, which assumes the male as norm by failing to distinguish between male and female experience, is regarded as deficient from a feminist perspective (Faith & Coulter 1988, p.196).

For the most part, gender surfaces in the distance-education literature not as problematic in itself, but as an aspect of other issues such as recruitment, participation, retention, performance and graduate career paths. Even so, the significance of the effect of gender differences in such issues is seldom fully appreciated, or even explored.

> Previous research at the FernUniversität, for instance on drop-out, did not focus on gender-related patterns and therefore is not a source of detailed information on gender issues, even though drop-out is assumed to be one of the areas where such differences would be highly visible. (von Prümmer 1987, p.23)

Even when female students are identified as a significant element in such issues, the literature reflects sexist attitudes. For example, Anwyl *et al.* (1987) identify women as constituting a significant clientele for distance-education institutions, but their discussion of the employment history of external students ignores housework as a category of employment. In another part of their paper, 'home duties' appears (Table 35a) as an occupation, along with 'farmer', at the bottom of a hierarchical scale, after occupations categorised as 'clerical', 'semi-skilled' and 'unskilled'.

What does a feminist exploration of such issues reveal? Do women become visible?

The aspects of distance education in which gender differences are regarded as most problematic are recruitment and participation. In a great many countries, the promotion of equal opportunity through distance education is either an official national policy or a stated ideal of individual institutions. A review of enrolment patterns in various countries as reported in the distance-education literature reveals that the ideal of equal participation is far from universally achieved. The statistics are not in themselves very illuminating, but generally speaking, a marked, but by no means uniform, difference is discernible between the participation rates of women in 'developed' countries and those in the Middle East, Asia, Africa and the Pacific. (Little information about the communist bloc countries is to be found in the literature emanating from those countries represented in the International Council for Distance Education.)

Reported participation rates indicate that the highest rates for women are in Canada (over 60% at Athabasca University and British Columbia Open University), and New Zealand (63% at Massey University). In Australia, 52% of the external university population and 47% of the external college higher education sector was female in the mid-1980s (Anwyl *et al.* 1987), but the proportion of women in the undergraduate program of the UK Open University had not reached 50%, though the percentage was higher at the UK National Extension College (Kirkup 1988). On the continent of Europe, women comprised only 24.8% of the student population of the FernUniversität in 1986 (von Prümmer 1987), and 44% of distant students of Swedish universities (Willen 1988). Koymen (1988) gives the participation rates of women at the Turkish Open University as 33%. Other estimations of female participation are 20% at the Universiti Sains Malaysia (Alsogoff 1985); 15% for the National Correspondence Institute of Tanzania (Muro 1988); 35% at the University of the South Pacific (Griffin 1988); and 24% at the College of External Studies in Papua New Guinea (Kaeley 1987, p.22).

Although the circumstances of women differ from country to country, common patterns emerge all too clearly. These patterns reflect the cultural and cross-cultural attitudes, customs and social norms by which the subservient status of women is maintained, and which in some societies create almost insuperable obstacles to women's participation in education. The small but growing number of analyses which interpret participation rates in terms of social and cultural contexts indicate that, broadly speaking, they reflect the relative status of women and the power of tradition in developed and developing countries. Kember (1981, p.183) observes, for example, that in Papua New Guinea: 'Any female who overcomes the traditional pressures against the education of females must be a very determined young lady indeed' (Kember 1981, p.183). And Trivedi (1989, p.20) mourns that in India 'poverty and social taboos almost debar girls from education'.

Disjunctions between the realities of women's lives and the requirements of educational institutions

By identifying the ways in which such cultural taboos are manifest, feminist analyses reveal areas of disjunction between women's experiential realities and the requirements of male-centred educational institutions. Disjunctions occur between the maintenance of formal entry requirements and the overall lower level of educational attainment by women; between the domestication of women's labour and their educational and career aspirations; between the imposition of fees and women's relative lack of financial independence; between traditional curricula and both the experiential knowledge of women and the realities of sex-segregated labour markets; between instrumental pedagogies and women's preferred learning modes. These factors are, of course, interrelated by social structures and complex webs of custom and tradition.

The under-representation of girls and women in distance-education institutions frequently reflects an overall lower attainment level by females in the education system (Boon & Joosten 1988; Faith 1988a). Unless open entry is a feature of institutional policy, women are more likely than men to be precluded by lack of educational qualifications from gaining admission. The level of attainment at which gender-specific disparity becomes marked varies from country to country, according to the overall level of education, but the pattern of lower attainment pertains. Trivedi (1989) discusses women's participation in higher education in India in the context of disparity in basic literacy rates and completion of primary schooling. Quoting OECD figures for 1982, Boon and Joosten relate female participation in the Dutch Open University to school attendance at undergraduate level, and compare the rate of 32% in the Netherlands with 47% in Canada and the United States, and 50% in France and Finland (Boon & Joosten 1988, p.255).

However, the relaxing of formal entry qualifications does not necessarily of itself ensure that equal enrolment by men and women will occur, because other gender-specific factors may still be in operation. One such factor is curriculum. Women are commonly less well represented in maths, science and technology-based subjects than in education, the humanities and social sciences. It has been shown that at the FernUniversität (von Prümmer 1987) and the UK Open University (Kirkup 1988), this imbalance affects the overall percentage representation of females when entry is on a strict queueing basis but quotas pertain in individual disciplines. Such imbalance is, of course, exaggerated by the degree to which an institution's subject offerings are geared towards traditionally male academic preferences and career opportunities.

Education and the domestication of labour

From articles about women in distance education in India (Mani 1988; Trivedi 1989), Pacific cultures (Mandie-Filer 1988; Taeiwa *et al.* 1988), Africa (Matiru & Gachuhi 1988; Muro 1988) and Turkey (Koymen 1988; McIsaac & Koymen 1988) where the traditional practices are strongly adhered to, the effect of cultural sanctions on women's educational aspirations becomes clear. In such village-based societies, women's labour is required not only for maintaining the household and raising children, but also for producing food crops. This leaves them little time or energy for other pursuits. Muro (1988, p.61) mentions that most women in Tanzania are so bogged down by farm work and routine household chores that they have no time and energy to be allocated to studies. Such requirements are enshrined in cultural attitudes which endorse the domestication of women as right and proper and negatively sanction education as unnecessary and undesirable. Even when education is seen as desirable, home and family must take priority. Reporting on a survey of women students of the University of the South Pacific, Griffin comments that:

> Unmarried as well as married women have considerable family and community duties and responsibilities that take time from their personal pursuits. Though there are individual instances of husbands supporting their wives in their studies, Pacific cultures generally put male interests and power first. (Griffin 1988, p.159)

Such culturally determined attitudes to women's labour and social roles are by no means confined to the developing world. Introducing an analysis of the occupations, course choices and career paths of women at the Open University (UK), Griffiths (1980, p.126) asserts that the expectation that the role of wife and mother takes precedence over all others has an over-riding effect on the choices of female students. Von Prümmer (1987, p.11) notes a gender difference in the study workload attempted by German students who are also in part-time employment and concludes that this can be explained by the fact that women have to meet more commitments in other spheres of life. Neither is it only in developing countries that women who attempt to realise personal ambitions through education can expect to bear the personal cost of conflict with the very people they rely on for emotional and financial support, including parents, husbands and friends (Kelly 1987; Martin 1988; Tremaine & Owen 1984).

One of the first people to bring a feminist analysis to the issue of participation by women in distance education was Swarbrick, who studied the experiential realities of twelve women graduates of the Open University (UK), and observed the way socially constructed beliefs are internalised so as to affect aspiration and motivation:

> The prevailing assumptions in society that women's labour is largely marginal, ancillary or of secondary importance to the role of wife and mother tend to become self-fulfilling prophecies where constructive alternatives are not apparent.

Referring to a comment made by one of her informants, she adds:

> These assumptions are evident not only in the acquiescence in parental expectations and the opting for supportive or 'caring' jobs but perhaps most revealingly in the comment on her own determined ambition 'I should have been a lad'. (Swarbrick 1978, p.171)

It should be understood that the feminist challenge to cultural norms does not necessarily imply a denigration of the role of motherhood or of the value of domestic labour. The intention is to make apparent the oppressive aspects of such norms, and, in the case of education, to analyse the ways in which they constitute barriers to women's growth and development.

The issue of women, education and domestic labour is complicated by social class. Participation rates do not necessarily reflect the overall status of women in a given society. McIsaac and Koymen (1988) discuss the intersection of gender and class in producing the 33% participation of women in Turkish distance-education programs, and speculate that these women represent an elite group whose ability to succeed is facilitated by the availability of large numbers of uneducated women to perform domestic duties.

One effect of domestication is that women are more restricted than men in terms of geographical mobility. An extreme example of the effect of cultural sanctions on mobility is described by Mandie-Filer (1988) of Papua New Guinea. In her culture, women who leave home are seen to be at risk not only because they are unprotected but because they are regarded as unreliable. Girls and women who leave home to attend an educational institution suffer the distrust of parents and husbands, the latter commonly expressing extreme insecurity, jealousy and fear. She says that such separation may result in complete communication breakdown between the woman and her family.

It has become a commonplace of distance educators (Anwyl *et al.* 1987; Tremaine & Owen 1984) that this mode of education is particularly suited to the needs of women because it enables them to study at home. While feminist scholars have expressed justified reservations about this view (Faith & Coulter 1988) in that it tends to reinforce the ghettoisation of women in the domestic domain, nevertheless it must be acknowledged that it makes very good sense in terms of the realities of women's restricted mobility. However, those who commend distance education as a way of encouraging female participation sometimes overlook aspects of such teaching systems which create difficulties for women. For instance, attendance at residential schools and study centres can constitute a serious obstacle for some women. Results of a survey of women distance-education students in India (Mani 1988) suggest that they find travel to study centres problematic, and there is some evidence that mobility can be an inhibiting factor for women in Western industrialised countries (von Prümmer 1987, p.16). It is interesting to note in the context of Mandie-Filer's description above that according to Kember (1981) an eight-week residential school is a feature of distance education at the University of Papua New Guinea.

This issue was raised at a counselling workshop at Cambridge in 1987 which I attended, and at which von Prümmer and several other women made significant contributions. In the final plenary session, a male delegate from a developing African nation acknowledged that the workshop had caused him to reflect critically on his institution's administrative procedures from a gender-conscious point of view. He was now aware of the disjunction between his institution's requirements for compulsory attendance at residential schools and his culture's sanctions on married women's mobility. The incident is reported by Faith (1988a, p.78) and demonstrates the importance of putting gender issues on the agenda in distance-education forums as a preliminary to change.

Lack of provision of suitable alternative childcare is, of course, an aspect of the domestication of women which affects their participation in education. Even in those educational institutions which accept some responsibility for providing day care for the children of staff and students, the situation can be problematic for off-campus students. The institutionalisation of regular childcare provision is usually the result of persistent lobbying and tireless organisational work on the part of interest groups. Childcare is costly, and its successful operation depends on assured levels of use on a long-term basis. Off-campus students are doubly disadvantaged in this respect because they are unlikely to have sufficient social cohesion to be able to organise effectively to promote their interests (Grace 1989), and they usually require childcare on an occasional basis, which is difficult to arrange in a cost-efficient manner.

The financial cost of education

Given that, globally, women are disadvantaged in terms of access to and control of the world's material and financial resources (Leghorn & Parker 1981; Seager & Olsen 1986), it is to be expected that the financial cost of distance education would affect their ability to participate. Boon and Joosten (1988, p.260) report that their research indicates that female students have less money to spend on courses than males. In the context of an analysis of the student population of the Open University (UK) by age, sex, previous educational experience, marital status and occupation Griffiths comments that:

> Women have less money available to finance their studies than men. Fewer are in employment and able to ask employers to finance their studies. Working women tend to get lower salaries than men, and housewives may well be dependent on money saved from the housekeeping or on a subsidy from their husband. Many women just do not have uncommitted monies for private use. (Griffiths 1980, p.138)

Little research appears to have been done on the effect of gender differences in access to financial resources on enrolment patterns. This can be seen as a symptom of the failure of institutions to recognise gender issues, which are unlikely to be regarded as problematic by educational institutions unless their viability is threatened by falling enrolments or failure to achieve stated policies. An example of the failure to make gender problematic can be seen in a report of a study of the clientele of the Universiti Sains Malaysia, in which the author mentions, but fails to link, the facts that tuition fees are charged, there is a compulsory residential component, and only 20% of the students are females (Alsogoff 1985).

There is some evidence of the effect of fees on enrolment by women, however. At Massey University in New Zealand, where female participation rates are equal to the highest in the world, fees are negligible. Tremaine and Owen estimated in 1984 that two-thirds of extramural students of Massey University were women, and that one in twenty-five of all New Zealand women was or had at some time been an extra-mural student of Massey University. Williams (1988) argues that the threatened introduction of a 'user pays' philosophy in higher education would disproportionately affect female enrolment. In Australia, the abolition of fees for tertiary education in the 1970s was followed by a significant increase in the participation of women in higher education. Participation by women in courses for which tuition fees are charged is a sign of relative social privilege and may mask greater gender disparities in educational achievement in the population as a whole. The example of Turkey has already been quoted.

The effect of fees on participation rates is linked not only to women's comparative lack of independent means, but also to their lower level of access to the support of employing organisations. Kirkup (1988) quotes the example of female participation in the Open University (UK) *Effective Manager* course, for which full fees are charged. More men than women are sponsored by their employer organisation, because more men than women are already employed in management-oriented careers. To facilitate access for women, a system of bursaries is necessary to compensate for this disparity.

Curriculum

Two aspects to the question of disjunction between women's experiential realities and curriculum have been identified. The most easily discernible is the bunching of women in certain discipline areas, broadly speaking, the humanities and social sciences. More subtle, but ultimately more profound in its effect, is the pervasive gender bias in the content of what is studied, even in those subject areas which are more attractive to girls and women.

The tendency for women to choose to enrol in education, humanities and social sciences rather than in maths, science and the technologies is clearly evident in distance-education institutions in various parts of the world. Such patterns of subject choice are already established in primary and secondary school, and are also associated with the gender segregation of the labour market. Feminist scholars argue that these patterns are the outcome of social structures rather than of individual or gender-specific psychological traits (Byrne 1978; Deem 1980; Griffiths 1980). This is not to say that individual girls and women do not experience structurally determined choices as matters of personal preference. The power of socially structured patterns of behaviour lies in the process of their internalisation as attitudes, values and beliefs (Berger & Luckmann 1966). Neither is it suggested that the choice of 'traditional' subjects is some kind of mindless conformity. Enoch (1988, p.74) defines equality of opportunity as the provision of freedom of choice, so that each person can engage in an area in which he or she can attempt to excel. Boon and Joosten affirm the rationality of conformist behaviour in circumstances where this freedom does not exist:

> Women who choose non-traditional study programmes have to compete against men in the labour market. It is entirely plausible that most adult women who are motivated to advance their education for employment purposes deliberately choose the 'safe'

> study programmes. Their difficulties are great enough without venturing into study areas for which they have not been previously oriented. (Boon & Joosten 1988, p.261)

What must be of concern to women in distance education is the degree to which this curriculum-based gender imbalance is regarded as problematic, and how well the factors which bring it into operation are understood. There is some evidence to suggest that institutions can be blind to gender issues. Discussing the under-representation of women in computing courses at the Open University (UK), Gerver comments:

> I often wondered about the fact that few men seemed to notice that there were few women in the field. Indeed, there seemed to be an unspoken agreement that one did not suggest that there might be a problem in the under-representation of women. (Gerver 1986, p.28)

A number of interesting initiatives to encourage women into non-traditional subject areas has been reported. Such initiatives provide a better understanding of the barriers which inhibit women's participation as well as positive strategies for change. Swarbrick (1980, 1986, 1987) developed a feminist model for the recruitment and support of women in technology and engineering courses at the Open University (UK), and Heiler and Richards (1988) have reported on a program aimed at providing vocational training in building and construction for women in rural Australia. Both initiatives were based on a recognition of the effect on women's entry into vocational training of financial barriers and the segregation of the labour market. The UK 'Women into Technology' (WIT) project targeted women whose careers had been interrupted by marriage and child-bearing, while the Australian project was specifically directed to overcoming the additional barrier of rural isolation. Heiler and Richards's evaluation of their project suggests that their model was effective because it featured a combination of distance education, group enrolment and a compulsory component of face-to-face tuition.

While the planning of both initiatives recognised structural barriers to women's participation, the experience of conducting programs specifically designed to facilitate women's entry to male-dominated domains provides evidence of the degree to which men and women actually inhabit different cultures, so that entering a sphere of activity which is particularly male-dominated can be likened to culture shock. Both these initiatives emphasise the social aspect of learning by demonstrating the positive effects of providing personalised support, a group face-to-face experience early in the program, and the facilitation of student-to-student networking. This suggests that there may be some important gender differences in preferred learning style. The implications of such experience for the pedagogy of distance education are discussed below. Swarbrick also emphasises the importance of an appropriate recruitment process which includes advertising designed by and directed towards women.

The impact of such initiatives on the educational institutions and systems of which they are a part is difficult to gauge, though it is interesting that the promoters of the Women into Technology scheme had to attract funds from outside the Open University (UK). It is heartening to note, however, that an equity initiatives project conducted by the South Australian College of Advanced Education in 1986 resulted in the acceptance of recommendations which had implications for the College as a whole, not just specific programs (Nunan 1987).

Programs which are directed towards facilitating the movement of girls and women into subject and employment areas from which they have been excluded are basically reformist. That is, they aim to give girls and women greater access to existing social benefits. A more profound, and ultimately more radical strategy is based on a feminist critique of the way in which knowledge itself is constructed. Such an approach to curriculum issues is associated with a perception that women who enter higher education are being exposed to a male intellectual tradition (Oudshoorn 1988; Rich 1979; Spender 1981; Woolf 1933). The endeavour to enter and achieve in this male-defined domain, which in certain respects is both foreign and derogatory to women, has involved them in:

> ... intense exposure to the invasion of consciousness by interpretations systematically developed by such specialists as psychologists, historians, and sociologists, as well as exposure to short stories, novels, and other literature, which in other ways form our dreams, wishes, visions, and fantasies. (Smith 1979, p.144)

Analysis of the content of many intellectual disciplines has demonstrated that women have been either ignored, or treated as anomalous to the male norm. Gilligan (1982) for instance, reconstructs the discipline of psychology. She says that the results of experimental studies have been interpreted by male theorists on the basis of male experience as the norm, with the result that female characteristics appear deficient or deviant. When the same experimental data is interpreted from a perspective which positively values female characteristics, very different theories can be generated.

Feminist critique of distance-education courses in such terms has only very recently begun to be published. Referring to distance education in British Columbia, Sturrock comments:

> Although in some fields women's experience certainly is acknowledged and honoured, many of the university-level courses through distance education in BC reflect the traditional and persistent academic blindness to women's achievements, needs and perspectives. (Sturrock 1988, p.29)

The examples she quotes are from literature courses, where the majority of students are women, and where the contribution of female writers to literary tradition is completely ignored. She observes that such omissions are so much part of the norm that both male and female educators can remain desensitised to them. Describing the history, literature and economics courses of the Dutch Open University as 'womanless', Oudshoorn (1988) warns against the temptation to try to redress the situation by including a few examples of females in course materials. This response, the 'add-women-and-stir' approach, is criticised as reformist rather than radical (Kirkup 1988, p.187). It is regarded as a kind of tokenism by Oudshoorn because it shows only the famous few, leaving the lives and perspectives of most women invisible in what remains a male-centred construction of knowledge.

Not only is sexism evident in the construction of knowledge through such things as the selection of topics, events and illustrative examples, but it is encoded in the media of transmission, notably in language (Spender 1980). Detailed study of course materials to reveal such 'hidden' gender bias has been undertaken by Matiru and Gachuhi (1988), who analysed the images of women and girls relative to the images of men and boys in three different courses of the College of Adult and Distance Education, Nairobi. The authors analyse both graphic illustrations and language, and demonstrate the operation of stereotyping through these means. A simple count of adjectives, for example, is very revealing. Among the many adjectives used to describe male characters were: 'outstanding', 'fearless', 'ruthless', 'wise', 'brave', 'influential', 'wealthy', and 'impatient'. Women were hardly described at all. In 481 pages of course materials, only six adjectives describing females could be found. They were: 'unreliable', 'follower', 'fearful', 'doubtful', 'embarrassed', 'unwell'. The authors conclude that their data shows that women are portrayed less positively than men in the courses they examined and that:

> Females have been relegated to their traditional roles in society – that of being subordinate, housebound, passive and inferior. Therefore, girls and women who study these courses cannot identify easily with the images portrayed in them. (Matiru & Gachuhi 1988, p.151)

Feminist strategies for change in curricula – a separate discipline of Women's Studies, or the integrated transformation of traditional curricula?

Academic programs called Women's Studies, which originated in the USA in the late 1960s, are now established in many institutions of higher education in various parts of the world. Women's Studies courses are available in the off-campus mode from Simon Fraser University and the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education in Canada, from the Open University (UK), from Massey University in New Zealand, from the

University of South Australia and from three Australian universities (Deakin University, Murdoch University and the University of Queensland), acting in cooperation to provide an interdisciplinary coordinated major in Women's Studies. There may well be other institutions which offer Women's Studies courses for their off-campus students; my survey was not exhaustive. The Australian inter-university Women's Studies major (McLean *et al*. 1987; Thornton 1986) is particularly interesting because it involved the exercise of goodwill and cooperation between heads of institutions to overcome the barriers of academic prejudice against the discipline and complex administrative difficulties. Such barriers could not have been overcome without institutional confidence that there was strong demand for the courses, and the dedicated commitment and cooperation of the Women's Studies teaching staff of the three universities.

Without denigrating the value of Women's Studies courses, Kirkup proposes that a radical reconstruction of the traditional academic curriculum is also required:

> We don't simply want to make higher education a place where more women are more comfortable; we want to change the nature of what has previously constituted the disciplines so that we are in the content as well as in the institution, in the lecture as well as the lecture theatre. Or in the case of distance education, in the text as well as in the armchair studying it. (Kirkup 1988, p.287)

It is hard to assess how achievable such goals may be, but depressing to note that according to Tremaine and Owen (1984), the fact that the majority (over 60%) of the off-campus students of Massey University are female has had little effect on the academic curriculum.

Academics at the newly established Dutch Open University in the early 1980s found themselves in the position of having to make a policy decision between developing a separate discipline area of Women's Studies, or opting for the more radical choice of integrating a more woman-centred approach into the mainstream curriculum of the university. Encouraged by the favourable climate provided by the attention given to the role of education in the emancipation of women in the initial formulation of institutional policy, female academic planners opted for the integration of Women's Studies with the Open University course offerings. Oudshoorn (1988) reflects critically on the implications and outcomes of this decision. Her comments suggest that such an enterprise may produce only small gains for women. While senior university management endorsed the policy, the tradition of academic freedom ensured that unwanted change could be resisted by those responsible for the content of the courses. Oudshoorn acknowledges that she and her reforming colleagues seriously misjudged the extent to which the mainly male academic staff valued the male-centred intellectual traditions.

Towards a feminist pedagogy

A common theme can be found in reports of special projects to encourage women to study in non-traditional areas (Heiler & Richards 1988; Kirkup 1988; Swarbrick 1980, 1986, 1987) as well as in reports of practice by women who teach Women's Studies courses (Burge & Lenskyj 1990; Carl, Keough & Bourque,1988; Cook 1989; Cox & James 1988). This theme is a strong personal commitment to the interactive, social dimension of learning. Kirkup attributes the success of Swarbrick's model of learner support to the enthusiasm of the small project staff who not only set up a compulsory residential weekend at the beginning of each course to introduce the students to the staff and to each other, but who also engaged in considerable telephone counselling of applicants and students. Burge and Lenskyj make telephone conferencing a central element of their teaching method, while Cook makes communication the theme of her critical reflections on her own practice as a distance educator.

There is some evidence that women students in distance education are more likely than men to seek and participate in person-to-person interaction. Discussing the results of a comprehensive survey of students of the FernUniversität, von Prümmer reports that students' answers to an open-ended question about whether they considered an isolated learning situation a problem or an advantage indicate that:

> ... men are generally happier to work on their own – at least until they come across a learning problem which they cannot solve without help. The women, on the other hand, like to share the learning situation and also often want to be in touch with other students in similar circumstances in order to provide not only direct help with the course material but also support in difficult or stressful situations. (von Prümmer 1987, p.22)

Her research also showed that women students visited study centres more frequently than male students, even though the women listed more difficulties associated with attendance, such as lack of transport or adequate childcare.

In an interesting paper which interprets the phenomenon of interaction from a social anthropologist's perspective, Hughes (1989) reports on the formation of voluntary support groups by off-campus students of Deakin University. Most of the active members of such groups were women over the age of thirty-five who were not in full-time employment and who had not completed secondary school. Drawing attention to the significance of enrolment for such people in terms of re-socialisation, Hughes comments that the participation by women in self-help groups may represent a rejection of their marginalisation and ghettoisation in the home. My experience as the organiser for the off-campus student organisation at the University of Queensland supports Hughes's theory (Grace 1989). Most of the students who were active in the organisation were female, and it was their concern to break down the social isolation of off-campus study which shaped the kind of service offered. It is interesting to note that women also play a prominent part in the Extra-Mural Students' Society at Massey University which has developed a similar model of student support based on a perception that distance education can and should be a shared experience (Williams & Williams 1987).

A preference for a less hierarchical, more interactive style of learning and teaching being expressed by women in distance education, both staff and students, is consistent with the model of learning developed by the feminist movement which emphasises small group discussion and consciousness raising. It is also consistent with theories of gender differences in cognitive style (Gilligan 1982; Harding 1985), which maintain that male cognitive style is more associated with autonomy, separation, certainty, control and abstraction, whereas females are said to think in terms of relationships and context, to be more empathetic and appreciative of ambiguity. It is quite inconsistent with the dominant pedagogical mode in distance education which has been characterised as an instrumental transmission model of teaching, and which accords much positive value to the characteristics of independence and autonomy in students (Evans & Nation 1989c). Whether such gender-based differences are in operation is debatable, but it does appear that some Women's Studies teachers, for example Cook (1989), experience incompatibilities between preferred pedagogy and the practical constraints of distance education.

Such possibilities raise interesting issues, none of which have been debated at any length in the distance-education literature, partly because the construction of theories of feminist pedagogy is a relatively new field of academic endeavour (Kenway & Modra 1989). Burge and Lenskyj (1990), and Coulter (1989) make very interesting attempts to engage with some of these issues. Burge and Lenskyj link four key areas of theory: graduate learning, distance delivery modes, the andragogy debates, and feminist principles, and report on the application of the principles they developed from such linkage to an actual distance-education project. The further investigation into such topics as gender-linked effects on cognitive styles and other learner characteristics could have interesting implications for distance-education practice, as well as stimulating some of the established theoretical debates.

I have discussed the participation of women in distance education in terms of disjunctions between the experiential realities of girls and women, and the requirements of distance-education institutions. These disjunctions are apparent in the areas of formal entry standards; financial resources; domestication and the labour market; curriculum and pedagogy. I will conclude by identifying what I see as the critical areas for debate and action which emerge from all this. They are conflicting definitions of 'equal opportunity', and the politics of radical change.

Equal opportunity or equity

Quoting Jewson and Mason (1986), Nunan (1987) distinguishes between liberal and radical definitions of equal opportunity. In the liberal view, equal opportunity is seen to exist when all individuals are allowed to enter into competition for social rewards. The radical view is more concerned with outcomes. Speaking metaphorically, if life situations are games, then the radical view is concerned with exposing bias in the rules which govern them, and socially inherited inequities which unequally weight the competitors. One might add that ultimately, the radical agenda is about creating different games, or transcending games-playing altogether.

Faith (1988a) distinguishes between equal opportunity and equity. The goal of the former is gaining equal access to the existing system, whereas the latter implies a challenge to the system. She identifies three interrelated aspects of the issue of gender-based equity in distance education. They are, access to educational opportunity; appropriateness of course choice and content; prospects for translating education into social and economic benefits. As well as mentioning access and content, Nunan adds the aspects of institutional and social barriers, and the inter-personal conditions surrounding the actual study.

Kirkup discusses the equity implications of a recent policy decision taken at the Open University (UK) which made it mandatory for all students to have access to a computer. Her case is that by ignoring or discounting the social and cultural factors which create gender differences in access to computers, the policy makers have ensured an outcome of inequality. She argues that :

> ... policies, especially financial ones, which begin from a presumption of equality, and then give the same treatment to all, can in their operation advantage some groups over others – in this case, unintentionally, male students. (Kirkup 1989, p.5)

Nunan (1987) points out the political implications of recognising that to be concerned with gender differences in participation rates is to focus on unequal outcomes. Referring to the equity initiatives project undertaken at the (then) South Australian College of Advanced Education, he acknowledges the difficulty of trying to achieve the goal of equal outcomes in a bureaucratic and competitive organisational system, because the radical view of equal opportunity challenges the assumptions encoded in the system. In consequence:

> A socially critical stance to equity means that action directed towards changing power-relationships is necessary if social reconstruction is to occur. (Nunan 1987, p.5)

The political realities

As mentioned above, one of the contradictions which feminists have noted is that while distance education advantages women by providing a convenient and flexible mode of study, it may be to their disadvantage to be confined to this form of education. Distance education is seen as particularly suited to the needs of women, because it enables them to engage in educational endeavours while continuing to meet the conflicting demands of family, household and outside employment. Moreover, as Mandie-Filer (1988) points out, the relative isolation of off-campus study may be preferable for women to the daunting experience of trying to hold their own in male-dominated classrooms. On the other hand, the ghettoisation of women in home study is seen as contributing to the maintenance of their domestication and marginalisation (Faith & Coulter 1988; Hughes 1989).

This argument takes on more power if considered in the context of the overall status of distance education relative to orthodox modes. Prompted by the Australian Federal Government's interest in using distance-education systems as a way of meeting its commitments to achieving equity for certain identified underprivileged groups (including women), Anwyl and Bowden (1986) surveyed academic staff of ten universities and thirty colleges of advanced education in Australia. Their survey revealed deeply ingrained prejudice against distance education which was widely regarded as a second-class form of education. The politics of distance education was the subject of the inaugural professorial address of John Chick on the occasion of his appointment as head of the School of External Studies and Continuing Education at the University of Queensland (Chick 1982). He likened the position of distance education to that of women – always seen as second class in relation to the dominant norm.

The effects of this political situation are always present for off-campus students, frequently taking the form in the 1980s of restricted subject-offerings and cutbacks to support services. Because of their relative isolation it is very difficult for students to gain sufficient information to form a political analysis, or to engage in any kind of political activism (Grace 1989). It can be said, then, that distance education represents access via the back door, and although it represents an enormous improvement over no access at all, women might still consider whether this is really what they want.

Women staff members have been increasingly vocal and influential in distance-education forums at an international level since the early 1980s. Although they often encounter entrenched traditional attitudes, there is evidence that some male colleagues listen attentively and agree with the main direction of their arguments (Faith 1988b). Women students, however, remain relatively disenfranchised by their isolation and by their low status in educational hierarchies. The investigation of their attitudes to some of the issues raised above would provide a fruitful subject for research.

Finally, it should be mentioned that gender issues intersect in complex ways with the issues of class, race and ethnicity. It would be ironic and unfortunate if, for example, feminist models developed in the industrialised west were applied to distance-education systems in other countries without respect for the integrity of their cultures. It seems to me that one of the achievements of Faith's volume is that its case-study approach enables the reader to identify cross-cultural patterns without losing the specificity of each situation. Rather than formulate any conclusions, I would like to remind the reader that gender issues have only recently (late 1980s) appeared on the agenda of distance-education forums as a field for theorising and critical debate, and to suggest that it is a field rich in complexity and scope for further exploration.

PART THREE

DIALOGUE AND INDEPENDENCE IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

BRUCE KING

THERE IS A STRONG normative element underpinning the two major contributions to this part. Both Helen Modra and Daryl Nation have a keen personal sense of what good distance-education practice should be, at very least at the level of adherence to certain key principles. Both papers document aspects of a personal movement as professional distance educators towards more informed and reflective involvement with their students. There are links between this normative element and earlier work in this course in that Helen and Daryl stand on one side of a debate about the nature and purposes of distance education. In a very real sense, they share a concern about the theoretical and practical issues involved in any consideration of how distance educators should relate to their students, and a commitment to making such issues explicit.

For some, this is the heartland of academic discourse about distance education. The issue is presented as a major force shaping the deliberations of a course team working on a distance-education course (see King 1989b). The course involved was the initial Graduate Diploma in Distance Education offered by the (then) South Australian College of Advanced Education. That chapter details the change in orientation of the course team towards their students which was provoked by one of the group who challenged her colleagues by asking them to reconceptualise all of their distance-education activities as support for students, and the changed pedagogy which was implemented as a result. With Anne Forster, the staff member involved, I have discussed this at length elsewhere (King & Forster 1985). Such recommitment of one's own thinking and practice is not always comfortable for the individuals concerned, although as Stephen Kemmis and Lindsay Fitzclarence make very clear in their dialogue with Helen Modra (which follows this introduction) the process can be as exhilarating as a good party.

In the introductory chapter we wrote:

> ... we can view distance education as a struggle between conflicting and competing interests out of which courses are developed and taught, students passed and failed, resources consumed, careers erected and shattered etc. (p.4)

When we were considering the initial draft of that statement, there was mild disagreement about the appropriateness of 'struggle' as a metaphor for distance education. We wished to emphasise the social contradictions and contestations which distance education reflects while avoiding other connotations which might derive from more prosaic interpretations of the word. In particular, we wanted to avoid any suggestion that the issues to which distance-education theory gives rise are incapable of solution by thoughtful practitioners. In other words, we did not wish to privatise the notion of distance education as a struggle.

At the social level, notions of dialogue and independence are of interest, not only for their intrinsic importance to practice generally, but also because the very nature of distance education is contested. Despite their generally shared concerns, Helen and Daryl do emphasise distinctive elements of 'dialogue', reflecting their sympathetic but different positions on the nature of distance education. What distinguishes their contributions are the points at which they have sought to give emphasis on the pathways of their professional development as distance educators. And this is not unusual. As we refine our intellectual positions, various sources will have particular importance in the process for each of us, depending on our previous experience, study and values. Often, as in the case of the initial Graduate Diploma course team, considerable time and effort to come is required to terms with these sources, as they challenge long-held or carefully worked-through positions. That is, the attempt by the thoughtful and reflective practitioners here to make meaning of the commonplace language of distance education, of terms like 'dialogue' and 'independence', and reshape their own practice accordingly, is itself a struggle. Helen Modra describes it in precisely this manner in the introduction to her paper: 'I was struggling to create the possibility for action whose inherently social nature I had not sufficiently recognised...' (p.84).

Daryl talks of his 'journey between theory and practice' and dwelling upon certain influential ideas, comments in relation to his present major concern:

> The term 'independent learning' has been buzzing around distance-education circles for decades. It creates warm glows (both inner and outer) for its users, it is used happily and frequently by many and its usage is even shared by those who disagree with each other theoretically and practically. Like 'democracy', 'freedom' and 'education' itself, few would eschew its use. Thus, its meaning is both shared and contested. (p.102)

One does not have to look very far to see evidence of the contested nature of distance education. I have written elsewhere (King 1989a) of the implications I see in the rationalisation of distance education at university level undertaken by the Australian Commonwealth Government. The organisational structure created by the Commonwealth involved dividing existing external studies provider institutions into eight newly designated national Distance Education Centres (DECs) and the rest (specialist providers and teaching institutions) which, for continuing viability, would have to associate themselves formally with a DEC. This restructuring was based not only on economic rationalism, but a specific view of distance education which emphasised certain approaches to course and study material development. I argued that the distance-education providers had a responsibility to address educational issues which the Government's stance appeared to ignore, or even implicitly repudiate. In his view the outcome of this conflict of perspectives, the 'official story' of the Government versus the 'educational dimension' subscribed to by many distance-education providers, is likely to be a reduction in the quality of educational experiences offered to students taking higher-education courses in the distance mode.

Some students and distance educators also appear to have markedly divergent views on the nature of distance-study courses. The increase of external students as a proportion of the overall higher-education population in Australia strongly suggests, amongst other things, that there has been a shift in the pattern of higher-education enrolments from part-time on-campus study to distance enrolment within given courses, suggesting a student preference for the flexibility or convenience of distance education (Dawkins 1988). That is, the students concerned see distinctive characteristics of the distance-education mode which they value sufficiently to change from the enrolment pattern one might otherwise predict for them. Some distance educators, and provider institutions, appear to have given little weight to such changes and are moving to implement delivery strategies which emphasise (or attempt to create) similarities between the two modes. For example, there are moves in some institutions to replace elements of traditional on-campus teaching with the supply of materials prepared for distance education to on-campus students. There are likely cost-savings to the institution, but one wonders at the educational rationale. See in this regard the comments in Helen Modra's dialogue about the assumptions of on-campus community which underpin much conventional higher-education teaching. More serious, perhaps, are initiatives which tie distance students down to studying at particular times and places through increasing reliance on group-based strategies made possible by developments in communications technology, for example, compressed-signal video-conferencing.

There is an interesting question here you might pursue. Why are distance educators so wedded to group-based learning strategies? Are they right to be? The wider discussion of the notion of 'community' between the three participants recorded in Helen Modra's chapter is important in this regard, particularly the account by Stephen Kemmis and Lindsay Fitzclarence of their attempt to create a scholarly community in their *Curriculum Theory* distance-education course. You can follow this up in Fitzclarence and Kemmis (1989), but see also the comments Helen makes at the end of her dialogue with Stephen and Lindsay, and the reading she suggests and also Modra (1989).

Both Helen Modra and Daryl Nation have drawn on the concept of dialogue in shaping their particular approaches to distance pedagogy. For Helen, following Freire, dialogue is both a necessary condition for learning and the essential path to the development of that critical consciousness which enables people to understand and act upon their situation (Freire's 'conscientization') and she addresses this both in the introduction to her contribution and through the dialogue she has recorded with Fitzclarence and Kemmis. Daryl Nation is pursuing a similar goal in 'teaching texts independent learning', although for him the issues are more problematic, centring around two intersecting dimensions: the capacities of learners to take an active role in learning and the adequacy of the base distance-teaching materials afford for fostering independent learning.

In talking of her earlier work as a distance educator, Helen registers her concern that her pedagogy was 'in spite of my best intentions, still excessively teacher-centred'. She continues:

> I was struggling to create the possibility for action without sufficiently recognising the inherently social nature of that action; the pedagogy I was using was in effect reproducing and even reinforcing students' individualism and alienation. And by the late 1980s I was beginning to wonder whether there were not something in the very nature of distance education that militated against the development of dialogue. (p.84)

This raises the nature of the links between teacher-centredness, student individualism, and the negation of dialogue. The paper from Daryl Nation is useful in this regard, as it describes his own distinctive contribution to the preparation of distance study materials, that is an approach to personal disclosure on the part of the academic by inserting commentary upon the process students are engaged in when working with the study materials through the device of parenthetic observations or asides. This might be considered a form of wmbedded dialogue.

Daryl's contribution has been substatially altered for this collection. In the original course materials for the Masters in Distance Education program, his paper contained substantial extracts from his own distance-teaching materials by way of example of his methodological approach. He considered it might be more fruitful for the general reader if he approached the same concerns in a more conventional discussion. The editors agreed, but at our suggestion Daryl looked at the possibiltiy of incorporating some part of the transcript of an audio-taped interview he had with me which covered a number of the points he wished to cover in the new version of his paper. The paper included here combines both elements of the original and extracts from the transcript. In this, it is now closer in form to the contribution from Helen Modra, which is also an edited version of an interview transcript.

The two authors support each other at a number of points. For example, Daryl is firmly of the belief that educators should make quite clear to their students what constitutes the nature and philosophical underpinning of the teaching strategies they adopt. This commitment to making patent what is latent is also addressed in Helen's discussion with her colleagues. Stephen Kemmis comments at one point: 'Explicitness, by the way, is, I think, an extremely important element of a good curriculum — that it's being explicit about how it works' (p.22). Lindsay Fitzclarence takes this up later: 'I think sometimes we fall victim of taking the notion of being explicit upfront and become very, very concerned about things being as clear and rational as possible. I think that we could maybe work with another word. The notion of visibility is a possibility as an alternative' (p.92).

Distance educators may wish to pause over this. To what extent do teaching materials with which you are familiar make clear to students not only their purposes and specific content, but the basis on which the distance educators concerned have made their specific curriculum decisions? There is a parallel attempt to achieve such structural visibility in Chapter Two of *Critical Reflections on Distance Education*, where Evans and Nation make clear how their book is organised and the process by which this was achieved.

As you move into this part, it will be readily apparent that the two major contributions are very different in form, from the papers prepared for the other parts of the book. As indicated previously, Helen has recorded a dialogue with two colleagues at Deakin University who share similar professional concerns. This is introduced with an account of her personal struggle as a reflective practitioner which locates her intellectual position. Her concluding remarks identify issues she would wish explored further, together with suggestions for reading she finds useful in elaborating some of the discussion raised in her dialogue with Kemmis and Fitzclarence.

When we were preparing this book, Helen expressed some reservations about the final section of her paper. She wished to avoid breaching her commitment to (and experiment with) dialogue through a conclusion in which she assumed some controlling role in determining what was significant in the recorded exchange with her colleagues. We discussed removing the final section and relocating her questions in modified form into this introduction. Ultimately, as editors we decided to present the paper in its original form. Our belief is that Helen's final questions, while very much reflecting her current interests, are an important part of her dialogue with the reader. As they do flow from her conversation with Stephen and Lindsay, they stand most logically where she initially placed them. It is important to acknowledge her reservations, however, which in part we shared.

Daryl's chapter reflects his commitment to explicating the personal experience which shapes intellectual development. We have chosen to discuss this above in terms of the relationship between personal and social struggle. Daryl makes every possible effort in his own teaching materials toprovide opportunities for dialogue amongst students and teacher. What this part is about is the possiblity of such dialogue in distance education and what form it might take. Helen raises this critical issue with her colleagues from Deakin University. How possible is genuine dialogue if, as Stephen Kemmis contends, 'we don't have grounds without students ... on which it could be said in any way that those presuppositions about risk and openness are shared'? Is dialogue potentially an intervention by distance educators which reinforces the relative power differential between them and their students? How does dialogue rest alongside assessment expectations, to choose a rather obvious example?

Perhaps we should close this introduction by indicating a starting point for you. Stephen Kemmis says to Helen at one point:

> ... the idea of dialogue is about creating circumstances that do not deny the possibility — in the long term — of an equal participation in a situation of reciprocity, symmetry and equality, but we're in a process towards that with our students, we don't meet it as an initial condition. (p.92)

Is dialogue at best a long-term aim of good distance-education practice, or can it be more than that?

CHAPTER 5

ON THE POSSIBILITY OF DIALOGUE IN DISTANCE EDUCATION: A DIALOGUE

HELEN M. MODRA

INTRODUCTION

THIS PAPER IS A contribution to the study of the idea of dialogue in distance-education pedagogy. My approach to dialogue is heavily influenced by years of attempting to engage with the pedagogical work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, who developed powerful ways of assisting formerly uneducated persons to become politically aware as they became literate.

In practice Freirean-style education required first of all an intensive investigation of the social world of the learners and the codification of key themes in that lived experience into material for the teaching of literacy: hence the use, perhaps, of words such as 'work', 'slum', 'brick' instead of 'Grace saw a grape' (the Brazilian equivalent of 'the cat sat on the mat'). In the exploration, with the poor, of themes such as these, Freire and his co-workers recognised that a crucial first step was that learners be able to understand that they themselves were subjects, were makers and re-makers of social life, not passive objects who should settle for a manipulative and mechanistic 'education', determined elsewhere, that would not lead them to insight into their own lives or empower them for action. For Freire, assisting the marginalised to 'read the world' as they 'read the word' was an indispensable part of pedagogy. This kind of education required, of course, very different relationships between learners and teachers from those that suffice when students are regarded as mere receptacles for the words of others. Freire speaks of 'dialogue' as the necessary condition for learning. Freire uses the term 'dialogue' to suggest that students are teachers and teachers are students. In a pedagogical context in which mutual trust and self-suspension are crucial, the parties come together as equally knowing subjects to engage in dialogue:

> There is no 'expert' who knows the answers and whose job it is to transmit those answers. Individuals come together with equally valid, but different, perspectives, sharing problems which have yet to be defined, seeking answers which have yet to be formulated. (Smith 1976, p.4)

For Freire, the goal of dialogue is 'conscientization', the development of critical consciousness that enables people to understand and act upon their situation. Dialogue is an inherently social process, for Freire. As he says:

> ... it is sufficient to know that conscientization does not take place in abstract beings in the air but in real men and women and in social structures, to understand that it cannot remain at the level of the individual. (Freire 1976, pp.146–7)

This means that one cannot use non-dialogical means of education if one's goal is conscientization.

I suspect it took me longer than it should have to grasp this point. The attempt to incorporate 'dialogue' into my approach to teaching came about, I think, after, rather than along with, my struggle to develop conscientization. My interest in conscientization emerged in the context of my work in education for librarianship in the late 1970s and 1980s as a response to what seemed to me to be damaging myths about neutrality and objective professionalism that dominated both the theory and practice of librarianship. (See Modra 1989.)

By the time I had moved out of the library school and into my present position at Deakin, I had recognised an important contradiction in my teaching: I was committed to helping students develop critical awareness leading to renewal of their own praxis but I was endeavouring to do this through pedagogical processes that were, in spite of my best intentions, still excessively teacher-centred. I was struggling to create the possibility for action without sufficiently recognising [illegible] inherently social nature of that action; the pedagogy I was using was [illegible] effect reproducing and even reinforcing students' individualism and alienation. And by the late 1980s I was beginning to wonder whether there were not something in the very nature of distance education that militated against the development of dialogue.

At Deakin, I found other teachers who had also been struggling with that kind of question and I felt encouraged by the opportunities available here for mutual support in the exploration of concerns about teaching. Given that my most recent written work on this subject had been in effect a fairly lengthy monologue (Modra 1989) I resolved that in further work, including that undertaken in the preparation of this paper, I should effect a little more congruence between process and content and pursue my enquiries in the form of dialogue with colleagues. Since both Stephen Kemmis and Lindsay Fitzclarence shared my interest in the question of dialogue (Fitzclarence & Kemmis 1989) I arranged for the three of us to get together and record a dialogue of our own on the subject of dialogue.

What follows is an edited transcript of that session. We began by talking about how we had come into distance education and how we had felt about it at the time:

EDITED TRANSCRIPT OF DISCUSSION

SK: I came into Distance Education, like many other people, entirely by accident and somewhat against my better judgment. Like many other people I didn't really believe it was possible; you had to work with students face to face, you had to have personal relationships with them and so on. But by a series of accidents, I suppose, I ended up at Deakin University which was about to become involved in being a Distance Education institution, and I came to it as a bit of a surprise. My initial ideas about it, I'm sure, were based on models of package production, ideas about delivering materials to students: that the students were the receptacles that we kind of posted information to, either by lecture notes or through audio tapes and video tapes and so on. But I didn't really think very much about the kinds of relationships we would have, and when I did think about them, it was very much in terms of programmed learning, activating learners and so on, getting the learners to interact with the material. It was really a bit of a tough learning process for me to recognise that students could actually play a much more active part in constructing courses than I thought possible. The first course I was involved in must have had one of the longest production times at Deakin University — must be close to the record: I think it took us about two or two and a half years to develop the *Action Research* course, which involved students in doing research projects in their own schools. A bit later on I was involved in a series of other Masters' courses that were much more conventional reading-oriented courses, and after that I became involved in the development of the *Curriculum Theory* course in which we decided to try out some very explicit ideas about making curricula with students. We were confronted with the embarrassment that a curriculum theory course demonstrates its curriculum theory and practice, because it is a curriculum and its curriculum is about curriculum — so there seemed to be a series of problems and contradictions to consider there. So we decided not only to make it a reading course, but to try and make it a course where we could get students much more actively involved in participating in the learning process.

HM: Do you want to say some more about that, or would you like to comment, Lindsay?

LF: Just feeding off Stephen's starting point there; it takes my mind back to the very start of Deakin. A group of us who were here right at the start were involved in a project that was a bit of a mystery to us because we had been in tertiary education in its more conventional sense and then suddenly there was this charter in the new university — the distance-education charter — and no one that I was associated with knew anything about that. What we experienced at that time was a sense of group excitement about this concept, and it just occurred to me that a strange sort of paradox at work through that initial period was that the university brought in from a distance a lot of key people, new people, founding Deans and the likes and then consultants from all over, and we had the opportunity to work with these people with international reputations. There was good money around at the time to bring together these people and essentially what it was, was a period like a long party in some ways. There was lots of excitement, lots of hard work. That it should have felt like a party is paradoxical. I suppose from that mix of a lot of new people and quite a lot of excitement and energy, a few of us that had been around in that initial period were sort of swept along on a wave of enthusiasm and energy without actually knowing anything much about this distance-education concept. It was being worked through in this intimate and intensely exciting environment with these people like Lawrence Stenhouse and Jean Rudduck, for example, who came out from England and worked with us on *Curriculum Theory*. So we had this initial sense of distance education shaped by feelings of euphoria. All parties come to an end and then you sort of move into the next phase, the hang-over period or whatever, when you actually start to engage the real issues, so we've been in quite a long hang-over period, approaching ten years now I suppose. I must admit what's happened is that I now reflect on and draw on lots and lots of sobering experiences, uncertainty with students, discussions with peers now that are a lot more circumspect, based on actual concrete experiences with this notion of distance education that we didn't have at the start.

SK: Can I just pick up a point about the hang-over which I think is a fine image? It's true that the euphoria about the development for many of us in a variety of different ways in distance education [persists]. This aspiration to get the course right may be as it used to be in those days. We wanted to try out the course, and then get it 'frozen' and put in place, and then what we sometimes called course maintenance might occur, something that could all be taken over by other people — the course developers, and tutors who'd handle the students and so on. I think Lindsay and I have both been in courses where we've had a rather different view — that is, we've never really arrived at a situation where we've ever had a hand-over of the course to somebody else to teach. It's been an element of principle with us, rather, that we would teach the courses we developed, rather than hand them over to other people to do the teaching. Now that's been an element of principle because — and it's related to the sort of action research idea — despite the euphoria and the 'party' we had developing the course, we've always regarded the curricula of the courses we've produced as provisional, never as final. In various ways we've devised means of keeping them a little bit more open than some other courses at Deakin and other courses perhaps elsewhere. The key study guide material we make afresh every year, there will be course material that we produce, course books and stuff that survive from year to year, and are expensive to remake; we try to build in processes to give us a little bit more flexibility to remake those as we go along. But what we do take seriously is the fact that we have to live with the consequences of the course development and we have to learn from the way that the students learn. I suppose if we were really doing well on our action research principles we would be collecting data very intensively all the time. It really happens that we are sometimes more, and sometimes less, intensive with this or that course in collecting data about how the students have reacted to this or that reading, or this or that activity, and we've been supported in our context occasionally by having people who were able to come in and do quite intensive analysis of how the students are responding to the course — so Terry Evans, for example, did a fine evaluation of the *Curriculum Theory* course for us; it's referred to in Fitzclarence and Kemmis (1989). But that question of living with the consequences of our course development is a very, very important idea. The idea is that the course is provisional and you can only know how good a course it is by its consequences. I think that has given us a kind of freedom as well, because I think we've taken the view that we didn't have to get it all right the first time but we had the freedom to make mistakes and to be ambitious and sometimes extreme about pedagogical principles.

HM: I guess my own introduction to Distance Education was a little different from yours, Stephen, and Lindsay's, in that I started off in about 1980 in a college of advanced education where distance education was already established and where they did have a sort of production-line approach to distance teaching and learning. I remember about the second day I was there I was whisked off to a conference on distance education which was about to begin, and sat there fairly incredulous, listening to all these very experienced distance educators talking about what their concerns were. My concern as an educator had always been the more human aspects of teaching–learning and the interactions involved in those, and I was fairly worried, I think, when I came back, that these were the gurus of distance education and their major preoccupations were to do with the things you referred to earlier — like packaging and technologies — and the student as a human presence, or indeed the teacher as a human presence, was virtually absent from those deliberations at that conference. I found it quite interesting none the less to engage with the processes of becoming a teacher in the distance mode, which I'd never done before. But I was concerned towards the end of the period I spent at that college, that there was a very efficiency-oriented approach coming in whereby any teacher could be required to engage in the teaching of courses developed by other people regardless of his or her own particular speciality. So it was very much the production-line approach — you know — we're all cogs in a machine called Distance Ed. and we just fit in. Throughout those seven years of my experience in that college, the thing that was the most interesting as well as frustrating and rewarding were the experiences that I kept having with students, which always managed to confound my expectations and those of the institution, regarding how pedagogy should work itself out. You always got the unexpected from your students, and this frequently threw me back on fairly painful questions about 'what am I doing here?' 'what is this relationship about?' 'how do I engage in it as a person, as a teacher?'. This brings me to a point that Jackie Cook (Cook 1989) has raised, because it ties in with something you said a moment ago, Stephen. Jackie raises the issue 'Are we overwhelmed with anxiety to produce the same experiences for internal and external students?'. I certainly think I was when I started in distance education, and perhaps I'm still there to some extent, struggling with a very deeply held belief that what goes on in a face-to-face classroom is somehow better than, and ought to be the goal which I aspire to reproduce in, my distance teaching.

SK: I think my entering expectation was certainly that distance education in any form would have to be a second-rate form of trying to re-develop or re-create the [supposedly] immensely sophisticated, subtle, responsive relationships between teachers and students. Of course I wasn't at Deakin very long before the critical line on that question that naturally existed here became very clear to me, and that is, that we have these idealised images of what that face-to-face teaching is all about and the students are very rarely in that sort of situation: and what seem to be these subtle, complex, sophisticated human interactions with the wise tutor nodding sagely and allowing a student to struggle with an issue and stumble into a brilliant insight, are actually an extremely rare thing, and most of the time it's a bit of a power trip in which the tutor is flogging the students along, most of them pretty alienated and disconnected and so on, and most people don't experience the brilliant insight. I want to go back to Lindsay's image of a moment ago. I think what we began to realise by the time we developed the *Curriculum Theory* course, and I don't think it was the case in the early stages of the *Action Research* course that I spoke about, is that I suppose we wanted the students to come to the party, rather than to be there when we had the hang-over: we really wanted to engage them in the party. I mention that now because in response to your question, it seems to me that I've noticed over the last ten years an interesting thing happening in the teaching of on-campus courses, that is, that our distance teaching is changing our on-campus teaching, it's not the other way around. We're trying to create structures that students can work in, we want them to come to the party too. The question is what is this party, what is this sort of moment of enthusiasm and conversation that we enjoy in the party.

LF: I'd like to say something about the party — but just a footnote to something that you said there. I think you're right about on-campus teaching being informed by the distance-education experience, but I do think there is something about the immediacy and the power of the on-campus experience that is often so contradictory. It does force us to think again about the more fundamental questions about education that Helen was raising before: human interaction, human presence, those sorts of things. To go back to the party idea. One of the really powerful images that remains is the discussions I've mentioned before with Lawrence Stenhouse and Jean Rudduck. A group of us sat in a room for a couple of days thinking about what sort of relationships, what sort of human interaction was possible, and the idea that we got onto was the notion of a …

HM: Do you mean possible at a distance?

LF: Yes. Was the notion of a community, and we invoked that idea; it became a central cog in the sort of mechanics that we developed at that time. It's a kind of curious reading of education in a way. What we did there is clear, we transposed a model of education that is essentially about richness and diversity, the notion of a community, onto the very abstracted and broader setting in a way that we've only learnt, through long experience, is just not possible. So I think we are being forced to re-evaluate our fundamental notion of education–community. One of the things that happened in the last year or so is that one of the mechanical devices that we constructed at that time with which to effect a notion of community, which was the course journal, we've let go — we don't use it any more. We're now talking about a different form of 'community', and we need a different sort of pedagogical device in which to deal with the sort of pressures and interactions it brings.

HM: Do you want to comment on that, Stephen?

SK: Yes, I think it is a very, very important point. We have some images about what it means to teach and what it means to learn, and the receptacle notion, the notion that I had before I arrived, was a very powerful one for me, because I had had training in psychology. But it was also clear to me that the activity of students was usually of the sort you could call re-activity, rather than any kind of pro-activity. We had an idea that in this community we would have people that could be pro-active. As you can see from reading our paper (Fitzclarence & Kemmis 1989), we actually set the stakes so very high for students to join in that community — it was a very formal, very abstract, very difficult community to belong to — and many students simply withdrew from the course as soon as they saw the journals from the previous year, because they didn't want to do that sort of work. Even the students who stayed in, some of them, had a hard time getting any sense of connectedness: undoubtedly there were students who did. The idea of community — it's such a sloppy word — is something we really do need to think about in a slightly more complex way. We think about community in the face-to-face geographical location kind of way, and so when you think about it in that way maybe you can talk about the tutorial group that you meet on Monday afternoons as a community, but of course it's not, or if it is, it's in a very attenuated kind of sense. One of the problems for us was that we also had a view of the field of study — curriculum theory — as a kind of community, people writing to one another through journals, people going to conferences, people working on projects and so on, and it was their connection through that work that made them a community.

I'm making this point now because one of our great tendencies is to think of a student as an isolated individual, and that invites us to think about the student as a receptacle, or else to think of the student as an entirely autonomous and powerful person who is going to set their own learning program to which we're going to be reactive. I think what we were groping towards, in the notion of community, was the idea that somehow there was going to be a negotiation between the students and us where they could be pro-active as well as re-active and we could be re-active as well as pro-active in our connections. The idea of a field of study as a community, although it's a very attenuated, difficult kind of community, is still, I think, an extremely important idea, and it's an extremely important idea especially these days and especially in the light of the turns being taken in contemporary social theory because it's a very contradictory, very difficult idea to hold together. You can argue with some force that there is no such thing as a community anywhere in the world any more, if ever there was. That communities are just images, illusions, and very often deceptions: we're caused to think of ourselves as groups for purposes that are insidious and sometimes very bad, we're being grouped together by other people, rather than making connections for ourselves.

HM: That doesn't sound a very optimistic scenario — but go on.

SK: I think that what I would now understand by community, more, is people who are working together, and there is no doubt that we are working with our students now. You might say we are working on our students, and you might say our students are working for us, and we could certainly have an argument about whether we're getting working with our students right. But the other thing is that we're a discursive community, there are some things, some topics, some ideas that are going to be discussed in a course on curriculum theory, that may or may not be discussed anywhere else in the world. But if you want to come along and have a discussion about curriculum theory, we'd like to create an opportunity for you to have that discussion in our course. One of the things we learned out of the course journal failures was that we'd made the conditions of the communications with us, in one sense, so open that it was very hard to engage us. We weren't actually giving the students enough 'meat' to enable them to join in the conversation. We were saying 'say whatever you like and join our community, but we know a whole lot of stuff about this and we're not telling you, because if we tell you, you'll be pushed into a subordinate kind of role', rather than 'we know something about this, we need to put more of what we know on the table, so you can engage us', and there is still the problem about how to engage.

HM: I think that is a really crucial problem there and gets us right into the heart of the question of what dialogue is. To me, this is central to this whole conversation. I started out my concerns with dialogue out of what I refer to now as a 'fundamentalist Freireanism'. I was deeply impressed with and endeavouring to work with the ideas of Paulo Freire, and dialogue is a very fundamental concept of his, but I didn't realise until relatively recently that his concept of dialogue is a tremendously idealised one: his notions of reciprocity and respect for each other and of the teacher–student with the student–teacher in a relationship of great mutuality didn't seem anywhere to be worked through in very concrete terms that might have given me the means really to explore what that meant. Having to come to terms with the insufficiency of Freire's articulation of the meaning of dialogue has really been quite a problem. None the less, at a human level I'm still very taken by his insistence on the human and on the notion of self-suspension, especially of the teacher in forms of dialogue. I guess part of what you're saying is that we don't have grounds with our students, especially when we're just getting to know them, on which it could be said in any way that those presuppositions about risk and openness are shared. We come in with what might be regarded as quite an imposition even if it is, we believe, in everybody's best interest and dialogical, but it just doesn't work. Can you relate to this?

SK: Absolutely — that for me is a really crucial issue. I'm a terrible teacher in this way. I want to script the learning encounter that I have with the students in a way that absolutely guarantees that they are going to learn something. I want that script to be explicit. Explicitness, by the way, is, I think, an extremely important element of a good curriculum — that it's being explicit about how it works. We used to talk about self-disclosing pedagogies and so on in the *Curriculum Theory* course. The way I now relate to the idea of dialogue is that it warns us about the possibility for denial of the personhood of the other, and that the important idea in the Freirean view that you're talking about is about recognising and respecting the personhood of the other, of the student in this case, not closing it out. The way I like to teach, the effort to guarantee that a student is going to get something out of this learning, frequently denies the personhood of the other, because I conceive the student as an abstract other, not as a person.

So some of the things we tried to do in the courses are things that allow the students to express who they are, to work on their work situations for the course, work on the relationship between theory and practice in their setting and so on — they have an agenda that they can bring and we can make that more explicit. But I would like to say I share that kind of disillusion with some of those Freirean ideas about dialogue, and the words that are very problematic in there for me are the ideas of symmetry and equality of teachers and students. Even if there is symmetry of some sort of ideal type, it's not describing the relationship that characterises us in real institutional settings, especially where credentials are at stake. Equality in terms of knowledge of the subject and so on is a problem. If I don't know more about the subject than the students, then I might have a right to work with them on it as a sort of project, but if I offer myself as a guide to curriculum theorising, then I'd better know what I'm talking about. Reciprocity, yes, but how much do we really give, having developed the course? Finally, I think one of the illusions that that Freirean idea gave us was the notion that dialogue would be in the present, that right at the very beginning I would treat students as equals when they acknowledge that they do not know enough about curriculum theory just by being in the course. That's an absurdity. So I share the problems about dialogue. But nevertheless, the idea of dialogue is about creating circumstances that do not deny the possibility — in the long term — of an equal participation in a situation of reciprocity, symmetry and equality, but we're in a process towards that with our students, we don't meet it as an initial condition.

HM: Yes, that seems to be an important distinction, and I guess we all had that experience. Did you want to come in here Lindsay?

LF: Yes I do. I wonder whether we can work with another association just for a moment to illuminate the notion of explicitness in the way that Stephen is talking about it. Often the notion of something being explicit can lead to hyper-rationality. I think sometimes we fall victim of taking the notion of something being explicit upfront and become very, very concerned about things being as clear and rational as possible. I think that we could maybe work with another word. The notion of visibility is a possibility as an alternative. If we start to go down that path what we start to invoke are notions of concreteness, of the other as present. The notion of dialogue that takes off on an abstract and hyper-rational path is actually where distance education can perhaps fall prey to a particular, very narrow definition of human nature. Because it's one that then starts to cut away a lot of those other dimensions of interacting with somebody. We think we can actually have adequate exchanges with people at a purely intellectual level and that we can get it right, we can get those exchanges of thinking right. I'll make this point really concrete. A few years ago as an undergraduate student I was doing a course in speech, and one particular day in the lecture, there was a power blackout. The auditorium where we were sitting was left in darkness, but where the lecturer was standing was left in the light, and so we could see him, he was up the front talking away and we were all sitting back in the darkness. He had been working for about half an hour or so when this suddenly happened, and he taught for about another ten minutes staring into this gloom (we could see him quite clearly) and then he just put up his hands and said 'Sorry I can't go on any more, I've got to stop'. He said 'It was all right in the first part; I knew exactly where I was in relation to you and now I just don't know any more, I can't see any of you out there any more. I don't know if my words are connecting with you in the way that I would hope, I'm not getting any sort of feedback'. He was effectively talking about body language, which is part of dialogue as we usually understand it. So he called it quits. For him, communication obviously required something that he no longer had. Now, just to turn back to what Stephen was talking about earlier. If we think about the course and the fact that people dropped out in those first journals, maybe it's a little bit like the story I just told: what we're asking from those people is to be like that lecturer out in that dark auditorium, to be out there, upfront, with your academic wares on show, with this audience, this invisible audience back there, having the chance to view you, scrutinise you, or whatever, without you having much sense about who they are or what they think. I think that's terrifying, as it was for the lecturer in the story I told, and that's possibly starting to get to the reason why we consistently had that drop-out at that point.

SK: Another story from the course that makes the point is about another kind of student. I don't remember whether it was the first or second year of the course but ...

HM: How many years did it run for in that form with the journal?

LF: About six.

SK: About the first or second year of the course, students had to write in to the journal giving a little biographical description, it was a couple of pages we asked them to write. A woman from South Australia sent in a wonderful little piece. She was obviously a person with some sort of literary background: the work was written with real flair, and I thought it a very witty piece, and interesting, about who she was and all that sort of stuff. Then it came time to ring the students and talk to them and I looked through this piece and I realised it actually disclosed nothing about her, it was just a very witty piece of writing. It turned out that her husband had recently died and there had been some other sorts of disasters in the family and so on — she had to move house or move job or something — anyway a series of personal crises had happened. When I was speaking to her about this I said, 'That was a really clever piece you wrote, but I realise I don't know anything about you after I read it'. She then told me this story. What a commitment that woman had to staying in the course. Her resistance allowed her to play a game with us and she had the skill. Most students would find being in her situation a very painful experience. But she had a lot of stick-to-it-ive-ness. I think now the journal and so on was actually rather humourless, rather earnest and serious-minded. People were to write in and tell us what their real concerns were, what they wanted to work on and how they were going to change the world, what were their social, political and ideological commitments, and where they were in the current processes of social formation and history.

HM: Is that all?

SK: Effectively that's what we were asking them to do — mind you only in two pages — and the pages were to be typed single spaced! (Laughter). We didn't laugh about these things then.

HM: It's good that we can now! Can I ask whether that demand for disclosure was accompanied by any kind of reciprocal gesture on the part of the faculty? Did you strip off a bit in front of the students in response, or at the same time? What was going on about *your* disclosure?

SK: I think we got a bit clever at it really. We engaged in the same sort of non-disclosure as this woman — we're probably a bit more sophisticated than most students. I used to read my colleagues' ones with envy, they'd all got these cunning little bits in there about how they'd done this and that, how they were really good blokes. But it was much more game-like to us, because in a way it didn't matter whether we wrote anything interesting or not, because the students were going to have to put up with us anyway.

LF: We had those aspirations initially — to be self-disclosing, to be 'fully-bodied' members of the community — but after a period of time, with the effort to keep the whole thing going, I think that our involvement became minimal and dropped right away.

HM: I'm curious about the meaning of all this, and I certainly don't think I can answer all my questions for myself, so I'll take the prerogative of asking you to comment. What do we *hope* in the whole ball game called teaching/learning? What do we *hope* is going to happen when we and the students engage in this kind of work at a fairly early stage? The reason I'm asking is that we must be operating out of — and I've written courses where there were very similar expectations, perhaps not as explicit as yours — but we must be operating out of some kind of assumption that something better will happen here than were we to go down the road of what we might call conventional distance ed. where students just read books and write essays. What are we hoping for when we set up these new kinds of pedagogies?

SK: I know one of the things that I'm hoping for, and it's to do with this idea of community, although that's a very stressed idea. I studied initially at Sydney University and as it happened I was working on anxiety and educational achievement, and there were three or four other people there who were working on the same thing. It turned out to be very unusual at Sydney University, which had ideas about individual scholarship and merit and excellence and all that stuff. But there were three or four other people, and I benefited enormously by arguing with people about those ideas. I went from there to Illinois where I worked in a well-known evaluation centre which you couldn't say was a collaborative workplace but there were a lot of individuals who argued with each other a lot. I went from there to Britain to another place where people argued with one another constantly and talked about their work constantly. Work was life, and work was serious. It was playful too, but nevertheless very serious — getting this job of evaluation right, or getting the job of education right. I came to Deakin and we have done exactly the same thing here, we've created working circumstances, where the game that we're playing is not just getting ideas into the heads of students, but it's about creating education, it's about influencing education in Australia or elsewhere in the world. It's a very serious job about what education is and should be and so on, and so the stakes are not just the ones internal to the game that we play with the students, the game is much bigger and much more serious.

Here, there is a commitment to changing education. Now the continuity for me between those other places that I worked, is that I knew I felt most fully alive, academically and intellectually, when I was working with other people, arguing about ideas, arguing about practice, trying to get things changed, trying to get things done, as part of a connected group, not just as an isolated individual. So the courses that we were trying to develop were ones where we could create those sets of connections where students could feel that they were part of that big task too. Curriculum theorising happens to be one facet of things you do when you're thinking about improving education. You don't come along and do this course and then know everything you need to know about changing education. That working together, arguing together, struggling together, that's the crucial thing. To me, teaching and learning are not just about the relationship between an individual learner and an individual teacher, or even a group of learners and one or more teachers. The internal relations of teaching and learning sometimes become so dominant in our thinking as educators that we forget the purpose of the whole exercise, and that's to do with what's going to make a better world and those sorts of questions.

HM: Yes, I guess we share those motivations. I'm mindful of something that I heard a few years ago. I was fortunate enough to meet John Holt a few years before he died and one of the comments that he made which stuck in my head was to this effect, that when we look down the road, as teachers, we must not assume that what we see at the end of the road is going to be what the students see when they look down the road. I really think about this a lot especially since I've come to Deakin where I think there is a much more overt and to me very welcome attempt constantly to connect teaching and learning and the broader society, and we are committed to notions of social justice in our curricula. But I wonder — and I think this is very germane to the problems you two had with your course journal — whether students have any concept that education is about the 'just society', when they are coming into a course and feeling very vulnerable and exposed and all the rest of it. Should we expect them to have any such concept? It gets back to the question about disequilibrium in relationships that we spoke of earlier. What is our responsibility if those perceptions of the macro-goals of pedagogy, if you like, are not shared, not even part of the students' agenda?

SK: There is a lot of crap in this area and we've suffered from it in the School of Education. Politicisation, polarisation, and so on. I say there is a lot of crap bluntly in this area because people frequently think — and I'm taking up the John Holt question — that we have a clear sense of the road we're travelling, and what we're travelling towards. I think on the contrary in the School of Education we don't have — in the vulgar meaning of the term — an ideological vision about the way the world should be. I think, though, that it's not a question so much of what we're going towards, as what we're going away from, and we know we don't want to be — it's not the problem of social justice that concerns us, so much as the problem of social injustice. It's not the problem of rationality, it's the problem of irrationality. It's not the problem of everybody being satisfied, it's the problem that so many are dissatisfied. All I'm saying about that is that it's very hard to get people to connect to those ideas — the ideas of social justice or rationality or whatever, as part of an education course, and to have that global frame. I make this response, because in talking to our students we're really not interested in telling them this is where they've got to go, education has got to be interested in these world questions because we're trying to create this better society and so on — which leads to all the polarisation, the politicisation and the anger and division. We're saying, we all share problems, and they're finding expressions in our teaching, in the world we're teaching about. So it means becoming more open-eyed about who the students are and what the society is, and what the practices are that we're involved in, making curricula in this case — most of our students are curriculum developers. The problem is they can't disassociate from those questions, but sometimes it's tempting to put your arm around the work, or to close your eyes and say, these are the things that have to be bracketed out of a course, they have to be left aside.

LF: A lot has been said there. One of the points I'm thinking about is this notion of Holt's of a road, and the point that Stephen was making about what's behind us rather than what's ahead. I think this particular course that we're talking about carries a sense of what's back down the road and of a system and an order that is in many ways not that healthy. The course conveys the idea that there are deep problems and what might be out in front is something that can be an alternative to that. The reason I labour this a little bit is because the course that we're talking about, in a variety of ways, particularly in its hidden curriculum, carried a critical dimension to it that — a critical message system, a whole variety of levels that the students reacted to, had to pick up on, or picked up on, or were resistant to in a number of quite discrepant ways. I had a student in recent years who actually produced a final piece of work that was quite outstanding, but at the eleventh hour just before she submitted it, in a very long phone call, she said, 'I've been in this course all year, and I've got to say I don't really believe in all this Marxian stuff'. She carried this view all the way through the course and disclosed it at the last point. She said 'I'm working and I'm feeding a line here that you people expect or that I think you expect and I've been in tertiary education long enough to know that I can do this and produce the goods'. What was more interesting to me was exploring with her in this long telephone call why she'd actually picked up this particular perspective — the idea of a Marxist agenda — and there was a heck of a lot of reading between the lines that was going on. She had cobbled together a particular image about who the course team were and what they wanted in a way that to a large extent was right, but was also quite distorted.

HM: We are going to have to wind up this conversation. Perhaps we could do it by referring back to the image which was introduced very early in the piece and that is the image of developing distance education courses in a party atmosphere. We are a few years down the track from those beginnings — do you feel there are still any elements of the party left, or do you hope there are?

LF: I'd like to register that some of those aspirations do remain. The point that Stephen was talking about, having a context or forum for critical exchange, for me is more important — my understanding is developed to the point where I say this is more important now perhaps than ten years ago. In that sense there are definitely elements of the party remaining, but the difference is we need to be a lot more circumspect about what relationships distance education can actually carry, and not see it as carrying a complete sort of community in the way that we thought about it originally.

SK: We've ended on a note of high seriousness — and it's a good thing to come back to the party, but in my experience almost all serious intellectual work gets done in a playful way, it is a playfulness about ideas. I guess because we're educationists talking about education, we think about the field in terms of getting people to join the party about theory and practice, about education and society, and putting those problems together, but it's certainly true about distance education too. I said at the beginning that sometimes we've been extreme, and I think one of the good things about this institution — about Deakin — has been that it's given us the possibility of not just being part of the factory of distance-education production, but also to be an experimental part, a laboratory of distance education. So I think our aspirations about getting the students to join the party, to be playful about ideas and at the same time be serious, hold, and I hope we're able to do that despite our worsening economic conditions, and the worsening conditions of teaching and so on. I hope we're able to keep that playfulness going, and that we'll have more experiments and more extremes and opportunities. There are plenty of really serious questions about how to engage students when we're not able to see one another — with new technologies, with simple telephone calls, with a whole variety of ways — but I don't believe any longer that there is the 'right package', the one right way to go.

CONCLUSION

For me, many questions emerge as a result of reflection on this conversation. As I'm aware of the need to resist the urge to 'script' the learning process even further at this point and to avoid the temptation to act unilaterally as the arbiter of the meaning of the three-way discussion just presented, I'll confine my 'analysis' to a few key points.

1. 'Community' emerged in this conversation as a key metaphor for teacher–student relationships, but we dealt with it relatively superficially. We have not endeavoured to ascertain just what understanding of 'community' informed the aspirations of all of those who were involved in the formation of the *Curriculum Theory* unit. Where did their understandings come from? Why was the metaphor so powerful for them? Did those people not expect the relationships — especially the early relationships — between teachers and students to withstand greater burdens than might reasonably be expected in the circumstances? (After all, it was recognised that 'community' is not or is only rarely achieved in the on-campus situation.) What might we learn by studying some historically more readily identifiable models of community and the conditions of their formation and their maintenance?
2. The recorded conversation suggests that our hopes for dialogue were almost irretrievably linked to reified ideas about direct, face-to-face interpersonal relationships. But who, really, is in the 'light' and who in 'darkness'? And who or what are 'visible'? Could we fall into assumptions here that severely limit the possibility for pedagogy?

And what might need to happen to enable us to stop looking for equality of outcomes between contiguous and distance education and search, instead, for ways to accommodate and celebrate difference?

3 What do we need to learn about the importance of time in the establishment of dialogue? We know now that the stakes can be set far too high at the beginning of a course and that this will very likely disadvantage students more than faculty (who may be adept at fudging self-disclosure and so on). Would it be helpful to place more emphasis on dialogue as the goal of pedagogy rather than as process to be immediately engaged in by all?

4 Can we build a successful, democratic educational movement with only an idea of what we wish to move away from and no clear idea of what we wish to move towards? Paulo Freire has insisted on the importance for educators of having in mind always the model of society towards which they are struggling, since every educational act is political. If we consider the movement towards more democratic education as a social movement, then social movement theory is very helpful. French sociologist Alain Touraine, who has done a lot of work in the French anti-nuclear movement, asserts that a movement must know what it aspires to — its Utopia — as well as that which it rejects; however, a successful movement cannot be built on Utopianism or rejection but must successfully combine elements of both into a social project:

> A social movement is not an affirmation, an intention; it is a double relation, directed at an adversary and at what is at stake. (Touraine 1981, p.80)

Touraine asserts that such a movement 'presupposes the integration and surpassing of behaviours of both crisis and Utopia' (Touraine 1983, pp.8–9). I think we need to take notice of what happened in French anti-nuclear struggles through excesses of both Utopianism and rejectionism and apply these lessons to our own struggle to build a democratic educational project in the Tourainean sense. See also Modra (1986) for development of these themes.

5 How might we more powerfully engage with and theorise a crucial issue that the recorded conversation only touched upon — the part played by inequalities of power, status etc. among participants in dialogue? Freirean theory, and indeed much critical pedagogical theory — which draws heavily on Freire — is becoming more widely recognised as inadequate if not actually harmful in this regard. These problems are most helpfully set out and analysed by Ellsworth (1989). Whilst Ellsworth is discussing her work in an on-campus situation her experience has equal relevance for distance education.

'Dialogue' in educational theory, Ellsworth reminds us, has roots in both Freirean pedagogy and in Frankfurt School-inspired critical theory. The Freirean understanding of dialogue, some glimmerings of which can be inferred from the conversation with Lindsay and Stephen, sets great store by notions of human worth and dignity and the mutuality of the intentions of teachers and students when they come together to learn. The understanding of dialogue that is energised by critical theory tends to be more rationalist in its assumptions:

> Dialogue has been defined as a fundamental imperative of critical pedagogy and the basis of the democratic education that insures a democratic state ... Dialogue is offered as a pedagogical strategy for constructing ... learning conditions [that produce critically active citizens etc. (HM)], and consists of ground rules for classroom interaction using language. These rules include the assumptions that all members have equal opportunity to speak, all members respect other members' rights to speak and feel safe to speak, and all ideas are tolerated and subjected to rational critical assessment against fundamental judgments and moral principles. (Ellsworth 1989, p.314)

Ellsworth is here outlining the critical pedagogues' assumptions about dialogue in order to demonstrate how impossible they are of achievement in the situation of quite radical asymmetries of power, difference and privilege that usually exist between teachers and students in tertiary education. Her compelling account of the dilemmas that she and her students faced in tackling racism in the context of a university-level course in curriculum and instruction is a welcome departure from the non-empirically-based rhetoric of much writing on critical pedagogy.

CHAPTER 6

TEACHING TEXTS AND INDEPENDENT LEARNING

DARYL NATION

FOSTERING INDEPENDENT LEARNING FOR students involved in distance education has been a major preoccupation of the author in recent years. There have been two inter-related aspects to this work: various attempts at creating teaching strategies which assist students to become independent learners possessing the skills and confidence to exercise considerable control in their studies; and a number of research projects and theoretical endeavours which deal with independent learning and associated issues. This chapter deals with these matters in three sections. The first deals with the discussion and debate relating to independent learning occurring in the 'literature' of distance education. The second offers four examples of teaching texts from the author's own practice. The third section provides an edited transcript of an interview, in which Bruce King presses the author to expand upon and justify his approach to independent learning.

This chapter is a radically revised version of 'Teaching Towards Independent Learning', which was created as a teaching text for the unit *Critical Issues in Distance Education* offered by Deakin University and University of South Australia (Nation 1991). The fact that the chapter needed such drastic change in its transition from a teaching text to a component of an academic book is of central importance for the present discussion. Space limitations have prevented any detailed critical reflection by the author upon his attempts to create and enhance independent learning, in the light of research and theoretical work which has influenced his approach. (Alternatively, this could be regarded as an unwillingness on the part of the author to prune even further the examples provided of his teaching texts.) It has been decided that the text which follows should remain more faithful to the original chapter than would have been the case if a substantial new section of critical reflections had been included. The interview transcript bears the burden of the critically reflective aspects of the discussion; although, [and I have vacillated about pointing this out] the examples themselves contain considerable critical reflection. A concluding note offers suggestions with regard to future discussions.

Independent learning within distance education

The term 'independent learning' has been buzzing around distance education circles for decades. It creates warm glows within and without its many users, who use it happily and frequently; it is even shared by those who disagree with each other theoretically and practically. Like 'democracy', 'freedom' and 'education' itself, few eschew its use. Its meaning is both shared and contested.

For the purposes of analysis, it is possible to identify two contrasting usages of 'independent learning' amongst theoreticians and practitioners of distance education. From one perspective, independent learning can be seen as part of a field of terms with overlapping usages: reflective (reflexive) learning, experiential learning, project-based learning, self-directed learning, deep processing, discovery learning, autonomous learning, active learning and so on. These terms are employed by those who believe that learners should and can have control over what and how they learn.

An alternative view, uses terms such as shaping behaviour, behaviour modification, instruction, self-paced learning, programd learning and so on. These terms imply forms of education in which learners receive carefully structured sets of knowledge. It is common for such approaches to use metaphors from communications theories, which understand teachers as senders of messages and students as receivers. These approaches generally make a feature of aiming their instruction at students as 'individuals' and they emphasise that all individuals need to learn at their own pace.

Readers familiar with work the author has undertaken with Terry Evans will recognise the binary model informing the above, which distinguishes between distance educators who regard dialogue as central to their enterprise and instructional industrialists who regard their task as harnessing behaviourist theory and practice to administrative efficiency (Evans & Nation 1987, 1989b, 1989c; Juler 1990). There is no need to rehearse or extend these ideas in this context, but simply to reiterate the belief that they remain valid in any attempt to understand endeavours aimed at fostering independent learning in distance education. It is not intended to provide a comprehensive review of the pertinent literature dealing with independent learning within distance education, but rather to outline key ideas from the standard texts and to provide more details of approaches which have influenced the author substantially.

The terms 'independence' and 'autonomy' are central within the sacred tradition of distance education. Desmond Keegan's (1990 pp. 51–72) discussion, which is essentially a review of the ideas of Charles Wedemeyer and Michael Moore, provides a defining example of usage within the tradition. The pioneering practitioner and theorist, Börje Holmberg, in his most accessible and eclectic work, expresses the issues as 'developing self-instructional courses' and 'student autonomy vs. control of students' (1989 pp.41–51, 154–60). Randy Garrison's work is clear and concise and links independence with a qualifying concept, 'control'. He puts a compelling case for the importance of the teacher for the maintenance of educational dialogue without the classroom (Garrison 1988, 1989; Garrison & Baynton 1987).

The 'classic articles' have been provided by John Daniel and Clément Marquis (1977), Erling Ljoså and Karl Erik Sandvold (1983), Moore (1983a, 1983b) and David Sewart (1981). Daniel and Marquis conceptualised the problem as resolving the dilemma between 'interaction and independence', by 'getting the mixture right' between provision of teaching materials for students' independent learning and their interaction with tutors and fellow students. In the heady days of the distance education renaissance, Sewart introduced a note of caution about the capacity of instructional packages to do all of the teaching effectively. Ljoså and Sandvold offered a case against the 'traditional correspondence course', which tightly structures and rigidly controls students' learning. They provided practical examples of means for providing students with 'structured' and 'unstructured' choices in their responses to teaching materials, and methods for students to bring personal and professional experience into their studies. They concluded optimistically:

> ... the correspondence course must be organised, in advance, in such a way that the student can choose 'his/her own course'. This makes new demands on the developers of course material and on the administrative routines. The role of the tutor is also beginning to change its character. The evaluation of the fixed assignments is not any longer the tutor's most important task. The tutor functions to a larger degree as study guide and partner in a dialogue between him/her and the student. This asks more of the tutor's imagination and understanding. (Ljoså and Sandvold 1983, p. 315)

Moore has published very widely under the heading 'independent learning' and similar titles. In the leading article in the introductory number of the *Journal of Distance Education* he offered a wide ranging critical review of theory, research and practice relating to 'self-directed learning and distance education' (Moore 1986). Its fundamental message was a variation upon the theme articulated by Ljoså and Sandvold. However, he pushed on to endorse those schemes in which tutors serve as brokers and consultants to self-directed learners (1986 pp.17–20). Susan Leslie's (1987) sobering reply is worthy of close attention. If learners are so capable of self-direction, Leslie asserts, do they need teachers? Why should distance educators move into the legitimate territory of librarians, the 'media', friends, neighbours and community groups? 'Teacher, leave those kids alone!'

In a recent series of discussions, Ross Paul has offered the most thorough and comprehensive critique of independent learning in distance education (1989, 1990a, pp. 82–95, 1990b). Open-learning institutions, he contends, are ideally suited for students capable of practising independent learning; yet, even the better recent efforts by these institutions, at creating teaching materials and providing student support, have progessed only partially towards assisting the bulk of their students to develop independent learning skills (Paul 1990a, pp. 88-94).

In the ultimate number of *Teaching at a Distance,* Alistair Morgan (1985) proffered a searching critique of independent learning, based upon research dealing with students' responses to both teaching materials and tutorials at the Open University, from the perspective of Saljö's learning theories. The article was but one contribution in the chronic debate within the Open University concerned with the nature of and the balance between *'central academic support* (i.e., the correspondence texts, study guides, television, audio etc.) and *regional academic support* (i.e., face-to-face tuition, counselling, correspondence tuition etc.) (Morgan 1985 p. 40). The author has followed this debate keenly and has been deeply influenced by many contributions too numerous to mention. There was hardly an issue of *Teaching at a Distance* which does not touch on independent learning and what to do about it in some way. Of particular significance was the variety of perspectives from which these contributions proceeded; part-time tutors, educational technologists, course writers, counsellors and researchers all had their say.

Much of the initiative, in this debate, came from Regional Tutorial Services which was attempting to maintain a significant role for face to face tuition. This is illustrated by Mary Thorpe's oft quoted observation about the University's course materials:

> When people talk about Open University courses, the unspoken assumption most often seems to be that the course is the materials – and the correspondence units in particular. This seems to me too narrow a view of what the course is, and by extension who 'produces' and who 'maintains' it. A course is not the correspondence units, texts and course-related materials produced by the course team; it is not a set of products, but a process, which 'happens' every academic year through the interaction of students, tutors and course team, based on the course materials produced by the centre. (Thorpe 1979, pp.13–14)

Particular emphasis was given to these matters in two tension filled issues of *Teaching at a Distance* published in 1981. These brought to the fore the essential contradictions of attempts to move students from 'dependence to independence'. Sewart (1981) waxed eloquently on Thorpe's theme. Moore, as a guest editor, offered a provocative quote from William Rainey Harper 'an American pioneer of university correspondence education':

> The correspondence student, given all necessary assistance but compelled to obtain everything else for himself, or write out his questions and wait for an answer, is led to investigate, to be

> independent in his study, and to have confidence in the results of his own investigation which the student who has constant recourse to his instructor does not have. (Moore 1981, p.2)

A part-time tutor, Geoffrey Wood (1981) mounted a vigorous attack upon the University's teaching materials under the heading: 'Pearls of Wisdom and Blobs of Knowledge: Foundation Course Tours'. Speaking from the heartland of the mythologies of the tutorial intimacy of conventional universities, he argued that the teaching texts pre-disposed students towards surface learning and discouraged independent reading. In a revised version he concluded:

> Knowledge is presented as a thing rather than a process , as contained and definite rather than as live debate, to be possessed privately rather than to be engaged in publicly, always to be interpreted in congealed form by unseen authorities: in this way the Open University constitutes *itself* as knowledge. (Wood 1985, p.146)

David Harris's searching analyses of these issues have been receiving much more notice recently (Harris 1987a; 1988; Harris and Holmes 1976). Unlike Wood, Harris does not peer through the pink hued lens of campus mythology but he has offered the single most telling critique of of the 'educational technology' behind the more closed of the Open University's teaching texts.

It is instructive that the Open University has been mature enough to foster and engage in these debates. They have been a significant influence on the author's principles and practices regarding teaching texts. Through practical circumstances and from theoretical respect, Morgan's work has been of primary importance for the author's recent attempts at teaching texts.

Morgan's analysis is particularly interesting because of the means by which he avoids the traps laid by his institutional context. His research evidence suggests that students would be disadvantaged by proposals to reduce provision of face-to-face tuition in upper level courses, on the assumption that experienced students could learn independently from centrally produced materials. However, while cautioning against such reductions, he does not simplistically endorse classroom tuition as necessarily more effective; nor does he reject approaches based upon teaching materials as ineffective. Rather, he urges the adoption of teaching strategies, employing materials and various means of teacher–student dialogue, which foster and enhance self-directed learning. 'Project work', he contends, is the most fruitful source for such strategies.

'Project-based learning' has been an enduring enthusiasm for Morgan (1976, 1983, 1985, 1987). His approach is impressive because of its wide ranging scope and its attention to the integration of practice, theory and research. The theorectical synthesis which he derives from diverse sources in philosophy, psychology and sociology provides foundational principles of immense strength (Morgan 1983, pp.68–75). These principles are employed to create a general model which can easily be applied to the conventional teaching strategies which are available to distance educators as alternatives to the 'transmission mode of teaching' which dominates the field. He provides brief details of teaching strategies which conform to the model (Morgan 1985, pp.40–1, 1987, pp.247–9). He offers a critical review of evidence from research about students' responses to project learning, in the Open University and elsewhere, as proof of the effectiveness of the approach (Morgan 1983, pp.76–7, 1987, p.250).

Morgan rejects the term 'independent learning' as a slogan that 'means all things to all people' (1985 pp.38–9, 44). The author accepts Morgan's argument that the term can be understood, even misunderstood, in differing ways, but he cannot accept that 'independent learning' is a useless slogan. Harking back to the opening paragraphs above, it is a term which needs to be used carefully and with particular attention to operational definitions. Taken literally, however, it does describe accurately Morgan's version of project work.

An insightful analysis of the capacities of teaching texts to overcome distance has been provided by Garry Gillard (1981). Theoretically, it is based upon a critical review of Holmberg's notion of 'guided didactic conversation' and the instructional designers' prescriptions relating to 'personalised style', which is conducted in terms of literary theory drawing upon Booth and Iser. It includes a practical analysis of teaching texts which range from the pompous to the conversational. Further, it makes comparisons with classroom teaching to demonstrate that physically present teachers may be just as distant from their students, in terms of teacherly engagement, as the pompous textual teacher. Its grammatical lessons have left a deep impression on the author, which are reflected in the teaching texts displayed in the next section.

Evans has undertaken a robust critique of 'course materials' produced by distance educators. He refers to them as 'tomes', which 'seem to be monuments to our curricular stolidity and pedagogical ineptitude'. These teaching materials are closed texts; they are 'brilliantly articulated and beautifully illustrated' pieces of academic argument, which 'can leave the student with a feeling of inadequacy in the face of such perfection' (Evans 1989a, p.117). These tomes proceed in a 'sequential linear order' and pay little attention to any principles relating to students' use of them. The assault continues:

> The teaching process for the distance teacher becomes one of writing text *as* curriculum. The fundamental trinity of questions : 'What do I teach? Why do I teach it? How do I teach it?' are never posed; only the first is given an answer in the shaping of text .... the students are removed in time and space from the distance teaching process. Hence, there are no opportunities for the glazed

> eyes and stifled yawns of the on-campus classes to spread their messages to the teacher. (Evans 1989a, p.120)

Evans concedes that there are some distance educators who are exempt from these strictures (1989a p.120). However, he is pessimistic about the capacities of distance education consultants for mitigating these problems. The standard 'solutions', ' "in text questions", "activities", "exercises' etc.' are merely 'textual remedies to pedagogical ailments' (1989a, p.120). Consultants themselves are generally involved too late in the decision making processes, in the planning and creation of teaching materials, to have any profound effects. Rarely, do they have an equal status in these processes: they tidy up after the content experts have written their piece (1989a, pp.120–4). Evans closes with a call for 'a critical evaluation' of teaching texts and the processes employed in their production. The author has worked with him in this regard (Evans & Nation 1989c). The examples which follow are attempts to accept Evans's challenge.

Teaching texts

This section is devoted to examples of teaching texts from my own work . Each example is prefaced by a brief statement which locates it in a context. Much of my practice in distance education, during the last eighteen years, has been dedicated to enhancing independent learning. This work has been informed by extensive discussions with colleagues and wide reading in the 'literature' of distance education and associated fields. My involvement in both research and theoretical work has assisted my teaching and drawn heavily upon it.

From 1983 to 1986 I was responsible for leading a teaching team which taught an introductory sociology course. Details of this course have been provided in various places and need not be repeated here (Nation 1985, 1987a, 1987b). From1988 to 1990 I was the sole teacher involved with *A Sociology of Educating* and *Australian Studies.* These were both upper-level units in a sequence of studies in sociology available to students in undergraduate courses in arts, education and welfare studies. Usually, about sixty students enrolled in each unit; half of these were full-time students studying on campus (often referred to as 'internal students' at our College) and the other half were part-time 'external students' studying at a distance. A few of the full time students were enrolled as external students for personal reasons or because of timetable clashes. Some of the external students live within easy driving distance of the campus.

A similar course structure and set of teaching strategies were employed in each unit. Substantially, the content of each course resides largely in the set texts, books available in the academic publishers' market place, which have been selected by the teacher. The teacher created a set of teaching materials and complementary tuition which eschewed an expository approach and emphasised clear statements of the courses' objectives and the requirements necessary for students to complete the course. Students were assessed almost entirely on the basis of projects they developed themselves following general guidelines and with assistance from tutors and fellow students.

The Classroom and Distance Education

Prologue

> **Grab 1**
> Fade in – voices etc. Roger Waters'
> 'Is There Anybody Out There' from
> Pink Floyd's *The Wall* (S.3.T.2.)
> Fade out – during guitar break
>
> Most teachers begin a course by meeting their students at the first class: in external studies we have to begin rather differently. By the time you and I meet face to face you'll know a lot about the Sociology 1 course. You may even know something about me. Obviously, you'll have heard this talk.
>
> I'm Daryl Nation, I'm the Unit Adviser for Sociology 1: hello and welcome to the course.
>
> Like Roger Waters I often wonder if there is anybody out there. I have to prepare written study materials alone in my study at home and record talks like this one in cramped studios with dead walls and equipment everywhere. I cannot see my Sociology 1 class: but I know you're out there ready to fire.
>
> From the script of Audiotape 1A
> Sociology 1, 1985.

Grab 2

After years of teaching off-campus students I still find it very difficult to begin a course. Classroom teaching allows students and teachers to meet face to face, and it is much easier for the teacher to check whether the messages are 'getting through'. That fundamental questions for teachers – do they understand what I am talking about? – can be answered by looking at faces, by listening for the shuffling of feet and the creaking of desks; if the students have glazed eyes you know you will have to change your method of attack. Distance education demands different teaching methods!

From Book 1:4
Sociology 1, 1985.

Grab 3

A Chequered Career
The draftsman sits
producing, consuming,
revising and feeling
draft after draught
in his chilly garret.
Each draft's more polished
but still flawed
and often blurred.
The last draught
floored
him.

From Book 3:2
Sociology 1, 1985.

This prologue appears in a paper which I presented at the International Council of Distance Education conference in Melbourne (Nation 1985, p.1). The 'grabs' are snippets from the teaching materials of *Sociology 1*. Grab 1 is from the script from the introductory audio-tape for the course. It was designed to give students an aural introduction to their distant teacher. Grab 2 is an extract from the first printed teaching text in *Sociology 1*, it comes from a short section which is designed to convince the students to listen to the audio-tape as soon as possible. Further extracts from the audio-tape script appear below. Part of this script and a discussion of its objectives have appeared elsewhere (Nation 1985, pp.5–6; 1987b, pp.194–6). Grab 3 emerged from the pain of creating teaching texts. It was shared with students in *Sociology 1* around the time they would receive their tutors' responses to their first assignments and would be at work writing their second ones.

(None of the following extracts appeared in the original teaching text. The extract from the audio script, which follows immediately, picks up from the remarks in Grab 1. The asterisks signify a large excision.)

> For me, teaching at a distance has a lot in common with the life-styles of contemporary musicians. Musicians spend months or even years getting their record albums together, and then go on the road to give concerts or 'live' performances. We spend a long time preparing study materials and we then see you – our students – (or some of you anyway) at our monthly weekend and vacation schools. Our contact with you, however, is going to be much more intimate than that between musicians and their audiences. You're going to write and speak back to us – in detail – via assignments, class discussions, telephone calls and letters. The physical distance which comes between us has to be overcome if we want to develop a productive teacher–student relationship.

***

> In my introduction, I suggested that external study is rather different than conventional classroom education. It is vitally important for you to appreciate these differences, especially if this is your first experience as an off-campus student. However, I believe it is equally important that we do not get too carried away with real and/or imagined differences between off-campus and on-campus methods of teaching and learning. After all, the fundamental problem which you confront, as an off-campus student, is the same one which confronts **all** students : that is, improving your understanding of a body of knowledge – in our case, it's sociology.
>
> All formal types of education (whether they're schools, colleges, universities, on-campus or off-campus) have three basic elements: first, students who (hopefully) want to learn; second, a body of knowledge; and third, teachers and their associated educational technology (books, films, videos, notes, computers, blackboards and so on) – it's the teacher's job to assist the students to learn the relevant body of knowledge.
>
> Our system of teaching and learning differs from the traditional classroom, but not in these basic elements. It is the means of communication between teachers and students which is quite different in off-campus education.
>
> Lectures and tutorials, the trusted methods of teaching and learning in conventional tertiary education, are replaced in distance education, partly or wholly, by printed study materials, memorandums, telephone tutorials, audio and video cassettes and so on.

> Nevertheless, while we use these different means of communication in distance education, the fundamental educational challenge remains: we have to build an effective working relationship between teachers and students, and, sociology has to be **taught and learned**.

Teaching and learning social knowledge

The extract below is part of ten page discussion developed to provide students in *Sociology 1* with a reference framework to enhance their understanding of the course's content and method. With regard to 'content', it offered them a typology of social knowledge which made distinctions between the following: everyday knowledge, the knowledge of well informed citizens, the knowledge of policy-makers and intellectual knowledge. The model stressed that these distinctions were analytical and emphasised the relationships between these types of knowledge. Fundamentally, the model was designed to assist students to take the intellectual journey between the society they know and understand and the scientific approach to it, and understanding of it, offered by sociologists.

With regard to 'method', it provided them with a binary model of teaching and learning. The extract covers this aspect comprehensively. These models were offered as analytical frameworks which students could use to think about their own experiences of teaching and learning. It also gave me a context within which a declaration could be made about the philosophical, theoretical and methodological positions which had influenced the teaching strategies of the course. Other details of these teaching techniques, their philosophical, theoretical and methodological bases and the results of research relating to students' reactions to them have been published elsewhere (Nation 1987a, 1987b, pp.196–205).
The extract which follows is part of a larger piece which appeared in the original teaching text (Nation 1991, pp.40–5).

> **Teaching and learning**
> The processes involved in teaching and learning are concerned with the following basic questions:
>
> - What is to be taught and learned?
> (To which the simple answer is – knowledge.)
> - How is knowledge taught?
> - How is knowledge learned?
> - To whom is knowledge taught?
> - Where should teaching and learning take place?
>
> Those involved with the theory and practice of education have various answers to these questions. In my view we can get a clear understanding of the range of answers to these questions by considering two contrasting alternative sets of answers. I have called these two different approaches to teaching and learning, the cockatoo and

the magpie traditions. (Yes, there is some intellectual significance in these names.) Below I have sketched out the alternative answers given by each tradition to the questions posed above.

What is to be taught and learned?
To the cockatoos, knowledge has an object-like existence, while the magpies conceive of knowledge as socially constructed. Cockatoos know there are different types of knowledge and that there is a hierarchy of knowledge. Magpies believe that humans construct different types of knowledge and that knowledge which is complex to one person may be simple to another and vice-versa. Cockatoos know some knowledge is useless. Magpies are not really sure what knowledge is useful.

How is knowledge taught?
According to cockatoos knowledge needs to be broken down into easily understandable parts and explained very clearly. A cockatoo teacher only moves on when his students have understood the previous parcel of knowledge. Magpies believe that it is not always possible to break down knowledge, because the relationships between pieces of knowledge are very important. Magpies expose their students to knowledge in the hope that they will understand it; if they do not understand it today, they may understand it in the future.

How is knowledge learned?
Cockatoos know that the mind of a learner is like a blank slate upon which the teacher can write. They point out that this is a metaphor, we cannot see into the 'mind', as it does not exist, teachers can only observe the behaviour of their students. Magpies believe we learn by asking questions and seeking answers to them, and that some students can ask more complicated questions than others. Learning, for the magpies, is rather like teaching, and they believe you cannot say teaching is the reverse of learning because teachers can learn from their students.

To whom should knowledge be taught?
Cockatoos know it is a waste of time teaching particular types of knowledge to those who will never understand it or use it. Magpies feel that all people can learn if enough effort is made, they concede that some can learn more easily than others. Magpies like their students to have some say in what they should learn.

Where should teaching and learning take place?
Magpies and cockatoos agree that schools are the important contexts for teaching and learning in industrial

> societies, but they also recognise that teaching and learning can occur outside schools. Conservative cockatoos believe in dividing schools into categories on the basis of what they teach, who they teach and how they teach. Teaching and learning is like selecting horses for courses and making sure the shape of pegs and holes are the same. Conservative cockatoos insist that only the able few should be custodians of the cultural tradition. Radical cockatoos want to replace teachers with machines. The very able teachers will program the machines and undertake the task of reformulating knowledge to suit the machines; the radical cockatoos know that knowledge which is unprogrammable is metaphysical nonsense. The radical magpies want to break down the barriers between schools and other institutions. Everyone is capable of some sort of useful education, according to the radical magpies. Conservative magpies believe in providing a variety of schools to suit the wide range of interests and abilities of students. Conservative magpies think people will learn if they want to.
>
> **Teaching and learning in this course**
> It is important for you to think about your own accepted style of teaching and learning. Do you tend to think like a cockatoo or a magpie? It is also important for me to declare that I regard myself as having magpie tendencies. Consequently, this course has been developed using magpie assumptions regarding teaching and learning. If you have been influenced by the cockatoo approach you will need to take this into consideration when you are dealing with our course materials. In the early stages of the course, particularly, I have attempted to cater for those students who I would regard as accepting cockatoo-type approaches to teaching and learning. Thus, we do begin with the 'simple' and 'move' to the complex, as I suggested in the discussion on knowledge. However, in my view there is a point beyond which knowledge cannot be simplified. Persistent teachers and learners can overcome the inherent complexities of knowledge.

A teacher thinks aloud, with three voices

The teaching text for the *Critical Issues in Distance Education* unit contained considerable portions of teaching text from *A Sociology of Educating*, almost a third of the whole in fact (Nation 1991, pp.51–9). The teaching strategies for *A Sociology of Educating* were provoked by the challenge laid down by thinkers such as Evans and Gillard and my resolution to create teaching materials which were driven by 'method' rather than 'content'. Given what Evans and Nation (1989c) had been saying in public, it was an opportunity 'to practise what I'd been preaching'. To put it another way, it was an opportunity to test my theories. It has proved a rewarding experience.

If the teaching texts were to eschew 'content', it was essential for the students to use 'Set Books' which covered the topic areas in the field clearly and comprehensively and which could engage them. Given my own preferences (prejudices?), these books had to include a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches to sociology. Further, at least one had to be addressed to Australians. I searched also for books which catered for the sub-groups, which could be predicted, within the class: aspiring teachers and welfare workers, who have a more practical orientation to sociology; and arts students, who are more catholic in their tastes. I found three textbooks which fitted these criteria and I was able to structure the course so that each individual student was expected to use any two of the three Set Books.

The main printed teaching text is a twenty-page booklet which I wrote on my Macintosh computer. It was then produced through desk top publishing, with considerable graphic enhancement. There are eight audio programs distributed on compact cassettes. The first audio program was a general introduction to the course from me. The second program, *Being Knowledgeable,* is referred in detail below. The three others are interviews with the authors of the Set Books. Another is a reflection on these interviews by me. The concluding two programs are interviews with a prominent sociologist who has made the transition from the university to the 'real world' very successfully. There was a periodical newsletter, 'Teacher's Text', which conveyed 'news' to the students as a group. The students received the tapes, the booklet and the first edition of Teacher's Text in the first mailing. The extract from *Being Knowledgeable* may explain why the first mailing also included a small packet of *Smarties* and a screw. All the teaching texts push the theories advanced by Evans and Nation to their limits (1989c, pp.40–1). Each aspect of the assessment scheme required the students to make choices regarding both content and method in what they put forward to be assessed. The entire scheme was 'project based', in Morgan's (1983, 1987) sense of the term.

The extract which follows is an edited version of the section of the teaching text relating to 'teaching methods' (Nation 1990, pp.55–9).

In The Beginning

In the earlier statement **What's This Course About?**, I outlined the teaching methods I have developed for the course. Should I repeat them again here? One of the first lessons learned by novice teachers is the need to repeat information constantly. Just because you have said something, written it on the blackboard, or put it in an assignment sheet you cannot assume that your students understand it, know it, indeed, even realise you have made any effort to instruct them. What, then, should I do here? I have chosen to refer you back to the earlier outline of my teaching methods; ... Why did I make this decision? There are two reasons: I am teaching college students, in an upper-level course and (at this moment) I am teaching through the medium of print. College students should be able to make the own decisions about the wisdom of obeying their teachers. [Gee, I'm a moralistic bastard/ teacher?] In print, unlike in the oral discourse of the classroom, things don't literally have to be repeated for students to re-access them. [I think I will ask them to repeat this paragraph, as perfectly as possible, in the Final Exam.]

Now that you have an understanding of the factors which have influenced my choice of teaching methods, we can get down to a more detailed consideration of the matter. [Did I hear a voice say: 'How were we supposed to know this?' I'll choose to ignore it.]

Teaching's a funny business. Fundamentally, it's quite simple. As I have said earlier, it's simply a matter of using appropriate methods to enable students to understand the designated content. There are so many ways of teaching. Yet, in our culture it is the didactic lecturer who is regarded as the standard model. [That's why the album 'The Wall' sold so well, but the film only has cult status.]

In an introductory sociology course (Sociology 1) I taught recently, I used to begin with a discussion of two competing paradigms [that should send them to the dictionary] of teaching and learning. [Some of them will be aware of these. Some may even be converts!] I don't propose to rehearse that discussion here. If you are not familiar with it perhaps you could ask a fellow student, who has done that course for a lesson. [That should be enough to get the uninitiated enlightened; of course the old hands will learn more explaining to them than they ever did from me. That's why I am a magpie!]

[I'd better not leave the uninitiated completely out on a limb.] Without repeating the discussion in the Sociology 1 course, let me outline the two differing teaching styles which compete for attention in our schools. One can be seen as naturalistic, while the other is technological. The former regards teaching as something which occurs naturally in human interaction; as we do, we teach; as we participate in life, we can learn from our fellow humans and from other parts of nature. The latter regards teaching as a set of techniques; well developed strategies which put things in the sequences that empirical testing has shown to be necessary for effective learning to occur. Each of these is a model; in practice teachers tend to identify with one rather than the other, but to use bits of each.[I wonder if they can pick my own preference.]

You are probably asking yourself[I probably should have said:'may be asking yourself'], 'When is he going to get to the point? When are we going to find out about the specifics of these teaching methods?' Be patient! Anyway I can't stop you skipping ahead; this is print you know, and I'm not there [here?] in the room with you. You may be a student, but you are a free agent.

No, I don't want to get down to specifics just yet. I want to share with you what it's like to teach in this way. How can I sit here in front of my Macintosh, in a dressing gown, and teach effectively?[They'll be the best judges of that.] It is very similar to giving a lecture or writing notes on a blackboard. We can't see each other, of course, but that hardly has much impact upon your capacity to comprehend the knowledge. Let's make some comparisons. In a lecture you would need to take notes if you wanted a written record of your understanding. In this medium a permanent record exists already, but it's mine not yours; you will either have to trust your memory (as you could in a lecture) or make some notes of your own. To get a permanent record from a blackboard you also need to make notes; this may aid your understanding. What difference would my physical presence make? What influence does appearing at a fixed time have on students understanding? How useful is the fact that you can deal with this when it suits you?

[I have attempted to demonstrate by comparison that it's possible to carry out expository teaching at a distance via print. I said I'd say something about what it feels like to do it, but I haven't. Does it matter? Yes, it does. If they could see me, they could get some clues about how I feel about the process. Skinner is wrong, we can perceive what is going on beneath the skin, we may not agree with the person in the skin, but we can, we generally do, come to understandings about their feelings. (I wonder if this textual technique is working?) I guess I'll have to wait until I see them, or one rings up or writes; I may wait forever,but I think not. There are always students who want to please their teachers! (That's a cheap jibe.) If you are true to your educational principles, you will expect students to talk to you honestly about their reactions, doubts and needs to know.]

More Practical Matters?

[I need to show them that the stuff above is practical; if for no other reason, than the course requires them to study teaching and learning processes, but also because I am their teacher, they need to know how I think. They also need to be introduced to the idea of reflecting critically on their own experience. But I cannot delay any longer, they are entitled to some clear statements of the practical details of teaching methods.]

This course will use the conventional teaching methods available at the Gippsland Institute. However, it will adapt them to its own purposes, indeed, it will push them to their limits. As a teaching institution this college is bi-modal it has to teach full-time internal students and part-time external students. Our policy is to maintain parity between the two groups of students; essentially, they are required to study the same courses. In effect, this means that the content of the courses is the same, or very similar, and the methods of assessment likewise. The substantial differences are in the teaching methods used with each group. Internal students attend conventional college classes on a weekly basis and undertake private study in The Library, in corridors or at home. External students receive packages of materials to enable them to do most of their study at home, they deal with The Library remotely or use other libraries and the attend Weekend Schools infrequently and, in a few cases, never at all. In practice, there are generally only two exceptions to this 'separate development': a few students attend classes in the other stream and some courses use the materials produced for the externals with the internals. In this course I want to reduce the distinctions between internals and externals as far as is possible. Of course, I realise that this will not be completely possible. But as far as I am concerned, I have one class and you're all equal members of it.

Three Forms of Teaching

The course has two main forms of teaching: Guided Independent Study and Collaborative Group Learning. Despite the grand sounding titles, each of these are minor variations of the conventional Gippsland approaches. Guided Independent Study refers to the work you will do by yourself with the assistance of the study materials we have produced for you and the Set Books. Collaborative Group Learning refers to the classroom experiences available in the course. There is one other important form of teaching which will be available- Personal Tutoring; this will play an important supporting role to the other two. Let's look at each in turn.

Guided Independent Study

Every student will receive a package of study materials. Each student will be expected to have access to two of the Set Books. Together, these resources will be the basis of your Guided Independent Study. External students will be expected to carry out most this study away from the campus; however, there will be one session at each Weekend School where they can get help from myself and fellow students. Internal students will do much of this study away from the campus and in The Library; although, they will be encouraged to attend a weekly session, located close to The Library, in which they will be able to receive assistance from myself and fellow students. Details of the mechanics of the Guided Independent Study program will be found in the Block Requirements and Strategies statements ...

Collaborative Group Learning

Collaborative Group Learning sounds a somewhat pretentious title for what may appear on the surface to be just another form of class. However, the term is both justifiable and necessary. These will not be ordinary classroom experiences. How, then, will they work? I have a clearer idea of what I want them **not** to be, than what they may turn out to be. They will not be venues for mini-lectures; they will not be seminars or tutorials in which students go through the motions of some academic game; they will not be boring. I want them to be opportunities for students who are engaged in challenging and interesting projects to share their successes and problems with each other.

Internal students will be able to attend one session per week and there will be one session at each weekend school available for external students.The success of these sessions depends upon the effectiveness of the Guided Independent Study program and my ability to get the group dynamics working harmoniously and efficiently from the outset. While I want to chair and guide discussion, all participants must be given opportunities to ask questions, give answers, share ideas and request help. Essentially, these will be contexts in which we can share the fruits of the Independent Study program. I see it as very important that these sessions have no part in the formal assessment scheme for the course.

> **Personal Tutoring**
>
> You will be able to consult me by telephone or in my office about any matter associated with the course (see page for details relating to contact). I believe that this type of teaching is absolutely essential and I would encourage you to get in touch whenever you have problems. However, I also want to stress two important points: please make every effort to contact me during the class times associated with Guided Independent Study and please be as well briefed as is possible, with regard to your problem. These cautions should not be seen as devices of discouragement, but as sincere suggestions which reflect the manner in which I intend to undertake the Personal Tutoring. External students, particularly, are encouraged to make use of the telephone contact service.

Being knowledgeable

The next extract for consideration is also from the script for *Being Knowledgeable.* A complete audio version was provided for students in the *Critical Issues in Distance Education* unit, as an example of a style of teaching. In its original context, in *A Sociology of Educating,* it was designed to offer the students examples of processes which were fundamental for the course: critical reflections upon previous experiences of teaching and learning. It aimed to engage students with the course's central objectives, as expressed in the opening paragraphs of its teaching text:

> As its title suggests, this course is about sociological approaches to educating. Why use the term 'educating'? Especially since it is conventional to name comparable courses 'the sociology of education. Am I merely engaging in the pedantic semantics for which 'academics' are so notorious? No! I want you to enter this course with a clear idea of my sociological approach to the study of educational processes. In a broad sense I share Roland Meighan's view that we should be concerned to explain how teaching and learning occur, as dynamic social processes, rather than with an explanation of the effects of education systems.
>
> The course assumes you have an interest in both sociology and education; it assumes you have undertaken at least an introductory course in sociology and that you have considerable experience of education. It will attempt to develop you as a sociologist and an educational practitioner. It celebrates the fact that the course itself is part of its own subject matter. It will offer you the opportunity to reflect upon your personal development as a sociologist and an educationist.

The audio program begins with the tutor speaking about the major project for the course which requires students to use a sociological perspective either to reflect critically upon their own educational experiences or to study an educational context. It then moves into a series of the tutor's own reflections, some of which appear in the extract:

> I come from a family where possessing knowledge was valued. As children,we were encouraged to ask and answer questions. We were encouraged to be critical and reflective. For example, we did not just go to the pictures, watch them and enjoy or hate them. We had to come home and talk about them. My father, particularly, would expect us to re-tell the story, to say whether we liked it, to compare it to other films. This was even more evident when we went to films as a family. Even today, some twenty-five years after I left home, when family members get together we analyse and criticise what we've been seeing on T.V. or reading.Our favourite meeting grounds are British television comedies. We often dwell in Fawlty Towers.
>
> Ours was an oral rather than a printed family culture. There were very few books in our house. Both my parents said that book-reading was a good idea, but they rarely practised what they preached. My father was a keen reader of The Age and The Australian; and the Readers' Digest was a major source of his fact and fiction. My mother read The Age each evening and enjoyed English women's magazines – they were more solid and serious than their Australian counterparts. Whereas my father was keen on telling us about current affairs and debating them with us, my mother's favoured form of oral culture were tales from her own family – the Murphys of Bruthen. She told us constantly of the old ways, the Depression, floods and Pop's wisdom. The Irish do things differently!
>
> Our family library, such as it was, contained some World War Two literature, the odd novel, our school textbooks, Sunday School prizes, a few children's novels and Arthur Mee's Childrens' Encyclopedia. The latter was our major source of knowledge. It had been bought from a door-to-door salesman by my mother on time payment. It's value, to us, was enhanced considerably by the knowledge that our mother had a special way of giving door-to-door sellers extremely short shift. We rarely used the Encylopedia for schoolwork, rather it was a source of simple pleasure. My brother and I often read it together. We even invented our very own examinations, which would be now misnamed 'trivia quizzes'.

We were encouraged to enjoy school and, by and large, we did. We were also encouraged to think about a future job. My brother wanted to be a lawyer; the family thought this was a good idea, as he was a 'chatterbox'. I wanted to be a farmer, like my Murphy uncles, until I about fourteen. My father, who has always had a good sense of the future, convinced me in 1960 that there was no future for me in farming. With a Murphy-sense for the familiar, I began to think seriously about staying at school for the rest of my life. I would theorise farming and Murphy culture and become a geography and history teacher.

Just as we talked about films, magazines, the bush and gang-fights my brother and I spent a lot of time critically analysing happenings at school. We were into the theory and practice of teacher-baiting. We liked teachers with a good sense of humour, a keen sense of justice, a wide range of stories and if not a love of knowledge, at least a sound grasp of the necessary subjects.

Despite all our attempts at analysis, we very much took school for granted. There was, however, a significant revelation which occurred to me when I was in what we would now call Year 9. In those days television was slowly establishing itself in Australian domestic life. We didn't have a set by 1960, my mother said when we asked for one: 'you can't ride around on a television set'. Our neighbours did have a T.V. and, consequently, we spent a lot of time in their place. Mr. Brickhill was a primary teacher. One Sunday during a T.V. viewing session I noticed him working on some sort of book. I asked him what it was and he said it was his work program. Up until that moment I'd thought that teachers simply taught what they felt like teaching, whenever they liked. Mr. Brickhill gave me a good look at his work program and explained how it worked. Teachers were under just as much control as their pupils! Indeed, Mr. Brickhill had worked out a balanced curriculum, to the minute.

Having seen that work program my perspective on classroom life changed dramatically. Teachers were no longer assessed on the basis of their personalities, their control of kids and their knowledge of their subject but upon my perception of how they had organised a work program. Not long after this experience I had my first go at teaching myself, as a Sunday School teacher.

> I was not surprised to find out that there was a Sunday School Teachers' Handbook. This was compiled in Melbourne by a set of experts in theology and education. It was a combined curriculum and work program. Everything was pre-packaged for each grade. There was some choice for the teacher; we were able to choose our own lessons to some extent. But there was a structured curriculum in the strict sense.
>
> My first very successful teaching experience came with my use of that Handbook. My custom was to lie in bed on Sunday mornings preparing my lesson for the day. Most of the lessons were based around Gospel Truths. I can't recall the exact Biblical quote, but one lesson was planned to illustrate the principle that we're all equal in the sight of God. Quite often we were advised to use teaching aids; the suggested aid for this lesson was a packet of Smarties. These were to be handed out at the beginning of the lesson; observed and consumed. The students were then to be led, through questions and discussion, to a logical conclusion: like Smarties, humans may be different colours on the outside, but they are the same on the inside. It worked, just as the Handbook had intended.

BRUCE KING INTERVIEWS DARYL NATION ABOUT TEACHING

Following is an edited version of an interview conducted by Bruce King with Daryl Nation. The audio version of the interview accompanied 'Being Knowledgeable' on the cassette which was provided in *Critical Issues in Distance Education*. The idea for the interview arose from Bruce's reservations about some aspects of the teaching text I had produced for *Critical Issues*. Bruce puts these to me in the interview, thus requiring me to justify my teaching strategies and to offer accounts of their origins. The idea for the edited rendition came from Helen Modra's very successful encounter with Lindsay Fitzclarence and Stephen Kemmis (see chapter 5).

BK: Do you adopt a persona when you're writing?

DN: I do, although I would never say that 'it's' not my 'self'; I'm very aware that I'm writing as a teacher or a sociologist or whatever. I'm one of the few sociologists who still think that there's something useful in 'role theory': the idea that we all have to occupy roles in a social system and adjust ourselves to a performance in particular roles. I am aware of the problem of 'personality', in the sense that Hollywood manufactures personalities. I believe a lot of postmodernist practice in research and postmodernist theory helps us to understand why that sort of effect on the world has created so many difficulties for us because we're not sure who the real Rock Hudson is or was and never can be.

BK: I'm interested in who the real Daryl Nation is, when he's writing. I use the word persona, you've used performance. How do you actually see Daryl Nation the 'distance educator', as you sit down to write to your students?

DN: Well, I have this habit, that I'm sure annoys many distance educators, of thinking very much in terms of the classroom analogy. I think Garry Gillard is right when he says that if we're going to be distance educators or teachers – whatever we call ourselves, we need to think of ourselves as having a class, a group of people who may be in a room with us or may be scattered all over the countryside, hither and thither.

BK: What does that do to your writing?

DN: You don't do a lot of writing as a classroom teacher, you fill in a lot of forms. If you do the job well, you write things in margins, you might write all over blackboards. These days, you might have printed notes and things; I'm aware that there's a lot more of that going on in all levels of education, but you don't see yourself as a 'writer'. You see yourself as 'setting up situations'. You think very much in terms of oral discourse, as a teacher. I have always done that and, in fact, I've never enjoyed writing; I've always found it very difficult.

BK: So you are bringing a whole collection of attitudes and ideas from your classroom experience into the distance field. [DN: Yes.] So, when you sit down and you are obliged to write to these distant students, you think of them as group, not as individuals.

DN: Both. I am try to address them both as a group and as individuals.

BK: Are you aware, as you're writing, of particular stages when you're addressing the group?

DN: It's hard to answer that question. I'm more aware of it when I'm reading back what I've written, as I have to do constantly. Of course, owning a Macintosh computer has changed things a lot for me. A lot of my attempts to have different styles of discourse, within the one text, have really come from using the word processor.

BK: You've said that you would actually prefer not to teach through writing, yet you have opted, in a significant way, to be a distance educator whereby you are constrained largely to print. You have written a lot about these matters. Are you doing the right thing with your writing?

DN: I don't know. I test this out constantly, with myself and with others. Some years ago, I did a large research study, with some colleagues, about the effects of course materials that I'd been involved with. We have spoken to the students who had to work with these materials and got their reactions to them. Not all their reactions were kind ones, there was some negative criticism. Not a lot, not enough to make me want to abandon the enterprise, but enough to make me want to proceed carefully and to be constantly alert to the sort of comment that you made yourself when you first looked at a draft of the text for this chapter. I think its a comment you've made before, when we worked together on the *Critical Reflections* project. You've got reservations about people who project themselves too much as 'personalities', not just into their teaching but into any form of academic discourse. [BK: Yes.] I can understand those reservations.

BK: Do you feel that you're inviting interaction with your students or are you being a 'clever teacher', interesting the students and doing things that are motivating them?

DN: Both of those things, the phrase 'clever teacher' is one that does touch base with me. I've always conceived of myself as someone who sets up situations for learners. There are many clever teachers. I believe the education that I had in becoming a teacher was very valuable for me. I have a very close colleague who was trained as what we would now called a prep. school teacher, an infant mistress. From her, I have learned a lot about clever teaching – the little tricks that teachers pull. I've always been interested in setting up situations that will help people learn and so, if someone says to me: 'This is a study guide'. I say: 'How is it going to guide someone's study?' I look at other people's study guides, just as I would want to learn from other colleagues, if I was working in classroom situations entirely.

BK: Do you see any tension between what you are saying now about clever teaching, and the kind of emphasis some people place on the equality of teacher and taught, the equality of the exchange between students and staff members of an institution?

DN: Yes, I would regard my whole approach as fundamentally flawed if a serious student working with me, or if I'm working with other teachers – working with us, could not see the irony that is there in all my work. It really worries me if I get any reactions that suggest that it's not fairly obvious. Now, of course, in recognising that perhaps I overdo it; perhaps there is too much irony and other forms of humour. But, I think it's important for teachers to send themselves up. I happen to believe that classroom research suggests that good teachers do that all the time. I think a sense of humour is the most important thing for any teacher to have.

BK: That's really interesting. I've always thought, as someone who's dabbled with amateur dramatics, that irony was one of the most difficult things to pull off in performance; I'm picking up the metaphor of performance from our earlier exchange. Do you think that there's any likelihood that students simply do not expect teachers to be humorous, to send themselves up?

DN: Yes, I have evidence of that, particularly as a teacher teaching at a distance. There are two groups of people who don't expect that: the fellow academics and many students. They somehow tolerate it in me and encourage it, or I wouldn't go on with it. The encouragement doesn't come entirely from the research that I've done, it comes from responses to the work that come from students. They make gestures that they appreciate the effort. This gets into very dangerous territory and gets you thinking about self-indulgence and all of those sorts of problems. But, I think it's inevitable that good teachers will have students bringing them apples!

BK: One of the things that first struck me when I first read the materials, and you'll know that I commented to you about this at the time, was that the ironical comments are quite often interposed in parentheses. I wondered if this in fact distanced either you from the group that you're teaching or students from what you're trying to teach.

DN: That's an attempt that to say: 'this is the "teacher teaching academic knowledge", this is the "person making comments about them"'. The two are together, they are as one; but they are separable and should be easily separable.

BK: You quite clearly like the notion of establishing, at particular points, that separateness. [DN Yes] You're the observer, in a sense watching how the students are managing the material.

DN: Yes, that's right and I think its important to understand that I conceive of most of the things that I write for distance education and other things, like this interview, as setting up something that Evans and myself and others call dialogue. I really do think that students will have an opportunity to get back to me; if not to me personally, to someone else who's involved in the enterprise and say: 'We want to make a comment.' In two of the courses that are discussed in this and the original chapter, I've tried to set up an assignment system so that the students can make the contact back through them.

It interests me, though, how few students want to practise what I practise. There's almost none that have slavishly adopted the style of the teacher. Very few have put themselves into their work for assessment, as much as I put myself in the text for teaching. Yet, they're asked to reflect on their own experience. They write in fairly conventional academic forms. There are two women, who were on-campus students, who put on a performance and did the whole thing their way. They took, if you like, the stimulation and then applied it – recruited an audience from the class and others and wrote songs. Back at Gippsland there's still chalk marks on the grey walls of that seminar room, where they had written things up for part of the performance. I think anyone who was involved in that, who still sees those signs, remembers the enormous amount that their students colleagues and myself learned from those students being stimulated to do those sorts of things.

BK: Do you think there's any danger that although you've said that you as teacher and the material are inter-connected, that the ironic style you've adopted may in fact reinforce what you don't want do get; that is, you may actually be elevating the text to a point where students feel obliged not simply to treat it seriously, but to treat it with an unreasonable reverence?

DN: That's never been the response. That's never been what they say back to us when they write assignments, talk to us on the phone or contact us in any way. I would be looking for signs of those sorts of things, but I think that's a justifiable concern.

BK: When we were talking before we the interview, you said to me that what has ended up in the original chapter is a couple of steps back from what you intended. You would actually prefer it to be 'less teacherly', I think you said.

DN: Yes, I was responding to critical comments that you'd made on an earlier draft. I thought I had an opportunity to be a bit radical: *Critical Issues in Distance Education*, two close colleagues running the course, they'll let me have my head. They didn't! I can appreciate the reason for that and I think this type of work is best done as team work. I think the teacher in the classroom gets away with a lot of these things, because it is a very private performance. There's a contract that teachers and students can have: 'Look, we shut the door, we go inside this classroom and we do all sorts of things and we don't tell the outside world everything about what goes on'. But, of course, in distance education the public can look in much more easily and I think that it's important to keep that in mind. But, I don't know that that was your concern, I think your concern is: 'Are people going to learn effectively from texts like this?'

BK: One of the things that concerned me a little bit was the use of metaphors, which I have no objection to in principle, but I was struck while reading it, that I found some of the packaging actually taking more of my attention than perhaps the substance.

DN: Could you give us some specific examples?

BK: I'm thinking of expressions like 'radical cockatoos'. Why did you use them?

DN: Well, we're often faced with the need to name something. Now I know there are some people who just want to name something. There are a lot of natural scientists, particularly, who are driven by the desire to be the person or the group who somehow finds something and can name it. I suppose that there is a minor element of that involved, but I was really trying to make a point that apparently comes from structuralist theory: that in naming something the actual word is incidental. Now, I don't actually accept that, I believe that we give names to things that are associated with other things. The word 'radical' has always been very important to me ever since I first heard about it. I thought, 'they are talking about my kind of person: these Radicals in the North of England, they go to Methodist Churches, they want to educate people, they want all people to get on together and they are very suspicious of the status quo, even though often live harmoniously within it'. Of course, to me the cockatoo is a much better metaphor for behaviourism than the mouse or the rat; I really think that the cockatoo as a species is the sort of thing that behaviourism suggests that humans should be.

BK: You've spent a great deal of your recent professional life, in a sense, documenting your own involvement in the field of distance education, and your own struggle (Is that the appropriate word?) [D Yes] to become a better distance teacher. Do you want to say something about why you've done that?

DN: Yes, I do because it involves an enormous disappointment for me, that not many other people have done it, at least publicly. They'll do it publicly in seminars; but I sincerely believed, I don't know whether I can continue to believe this, that others would do it. I think some others have been doing it, and I think the old *Teaching at a Distance* used to encourage Open University staff, particularly the part time tutors, to do a version of this sort of thing and I saw myself involving myself in that exercise. So one reason I've done it is to encourage others to do it and its been disappointing to me that not all that many people have wanted to join me.

BK: I don't want you to put your whole life into a paragraph, given what you've said, but if you could summarise it briefly. What do you want your students to get out of this particular piece of writing that you've done for the course?

DN: Well, there's two things, I want them to get the clear message that as someone who ought to know a fair bit about distance education, I've identified some things that they can read about independent learning that will help them to be teachers who can foster independent learning. If they want to do that, they read some of the things that have been referred and that will improve their performance. We can assume that they're bright people and they'll be able to get something out of those things and I've guided them to that reading. I am still on this quest to get other teachers to think about not doing things my way, doing things their way, to take this example of someone who thinks its worthwhile analysing their performance in a very radical way. I hope it also be obvious that what I say in public stops well short of what I say to myself in private about success and failure in my ventures as a teacher.

A CONCLUDING NOTE

As this is an 'academic book' addressed to those who are interested in forms of distance education which go *Beyond the Text,* it seemed to me after lengthy consideration, that it required a text form which was less open than its progenitor. This chapter aims to inform rather than to teach.

You, the reader, are assumed to be more independent than the students of *Teaching Towards Independent Learning*. You don't want to be required to read particular works. You don't have assignments set by teachers. You may not need as much intellectual assistance as students require in order to deconstruct this text.

The teaching texts which are central to both this chapter and its progenitor appear to succeed as planned. Research has confirmed the efficacy of the teaching texts developed for the introductory sociology course (Nation 1985, 1987a, 1987b). Regrettably, there has been no rigorous research conducted on the other courses. However, experience suggests that their teaching texts do succeed in fostering within students both a spirit for and the skills to practice, independent learning. The standard of students' work has been almost universally high and some has been refreshingly original. As a teacher, I believe my objectives have been attained substantially.

I am left wondering why more of my colleagues do not practise their own versions of this approach. I know of only one course which does this, *Classroom Processes* from Deakin University. The *Critical Issues in Distance Education* course moved in this direction: by employing a project-based form of assessment and having some teaching texts which moved away from authoritative academic monologues. Lamentably, much more could have been done. These issues would seem to be worth researching.

As I write, I am following theoretical leads stimulated by Philip Juler (1990) and David Hamilton's contribution to *Classroom Processes* which has put me in touch with his accounts of the emergence of 'class teaching' (Hamilton 1989, 1990). This has put me in touch with Walter Ong's powerful work on orality and literacy (Ong 1977, 1982). Our experience with print, when compared to writing and oral expression, is relatively limited! My assignment is to understand these ideas and apply them in two practical contexts: my next teaching mission and a chapter in the sequel to *Critical Reflections on Distance Education*. Both will regard distance education as but one manifestation of the powerful implications of the 'technologising of the word', which stems from the inventions of writing, printing and audio visual recording and all that has flowed consequentially from these momentous human achievements (Ong 1977, 1982).

Acknowledgments

I would like to the acknowledge to the advice and criticism offered by Terry Evans, Anne Howells and Bruce King in the creation of this text. Others who have assisted are named throughout, albeit sometimes by pseudonyms and general references. My family have given up complaining about being mentioned in classrooms.

PART FOUR

DISTANCE EDUCATION IN DEVELOPING NATIONS

INTRODUCTION

TERRY EVANS

THE DRIVE FOR DEVELOPMENT in third world countries is predicated on boosting the educational levels of the population, alongside developments to other elements of the social and economic infrastructure. The intergenerational nature of education which is taken for granted in developed nations proves to be an enormous problem for the development of everything from national educational infrastructures through to an individual person's educational level. The problem can be seen as simply where to start: with the children? With the policymakers and bureaucrats? With the workforce? With the village people? And so it continues.

Many developing nations recognise that their future rests with the children and consider that it is important to increase the numbers of years of schooling for all children as well as the quality of schooling itself. How do you do this? Immediately, teachers become the next consideration; it is recognised that to improve the quality of education the nation needs to address those of the adult generation who teach in schools. Often this is not just a matter of improving the educational and professional standards of the teachers, it usually also means preparing more people to be teachers. This in itself means that there needs to be a sufficient number of young people leaving school who are qualified to study to be teachers and often there are just not enough children staying at school long enough to qualify. Usually there are insufficient teachers to teach them anyway.

Even if all these things were not problems, it is an impossible burden for families and village communities to have their young people taken out of the subsistence or cash labour force in order to stay at school. The values of the older people in the communities and their own educational level (usually no schooling and, therefore, few literacy and numeracy skills) militate against their children being encouraged to benefit from school. The local culture is also very likely to have sharply divided lines of power and authority which may conflict with the educational values developed through school curricula which are geared to development along Western lines. This is especially the case in terms of gender where government policies concerning gender equity (which are often driven by concerns for maximising the use of the workforce, that is both men and women, rather than any moral concern for gender equity) are invariably at odds with the gender relations of indigenous communities. Such conflicting values and interests can make the task of improving educational levels broadly across a national population very difficult.

The 'curriculum of development' for developing nations is itself an enormous collection of problematic concerns. Development is shaped by intentions to achieve economic and social (and, sometimes political) conditions which are commensurate with those which exist in developed nations. The nature of the process and content of development is, therefore, predetermined by what constitutes the developed state. In this sense, any developing nation's development agenda is shaped by what constitutes the developed state in, for example, the Western nations of Europe or North America. Hence, the nature of the language, religious, political and ideological underpinnings of the developed nations typically do not accord with those of developing nations or only do so to the extent that they have been colonised in the past by such nations. Therefore, the curriculum of a developing nation reflects developed nations' concerns and interests which, to some degree, have been incorporated and accommodated in the cause of development.

Within the area of curriculum, which I am taking in the national sense of all the curricula embodied in educational institutions 'teaching towards development', there are several substantial difficulties which emerge and mutate with each successive educational engagement. One important area is language. Many developing nations have reached a position where they have moved to adopt, at least at some educational levels, usually the highest, a language from a developed nation; increasingly this language is English. Often such foreign-language adoption suggests that, not only does the problem of teaching a second language (or more) to people have to be solved, but also indigenous languages, and therefore cultures, come under threat. In nations where there are many different languages and where these languages reflect traditional indigenous cultures and political divisions, the capacity for the introduction of a foreign language to disrupt the socio-political order cannot be underestimated.

Needless to say, a 'developed' state is not a fixed entity; it is continually undergoing change ('development') of social, economic and cultural kinds. Therefore, the task for developing countries is to attempt to catch-up with what is, in itself, a developing state. This suggests that any rate of development needs to be faster than that which is taking place in the developed world and it needs to be done without the resources and infrastructure of the developed world. As one can see the problems for developing countries in terms of education are complicated and extremely difficult. These sorts of difficulties exist for other aspects of the development process such as health, industrial or agricultural development. However, it is arguable that even these aspects depend partly on education for their fulfilment.

In approaching the educational task there are several options available to developing nations which can assist them to 'leapfrog' stages in development. However, none of these options is without its own difficulties. One of the usual ways is to use forms of overseas aid by importing expatriates into the country to work as teachers, educational advisers, principals, school inspectors etc. This has the advantage of immediately improving the educational backgrounds and numbers of the educational workforce, but has all the disadvantages of the expatriates being seen as outsiders, having little understanding of local cultures and languages etc. If they are employed by the host nation this is usually on contracts which are well above local rates of pay; this is not only a financial burden, but is also a source of tension between the local and expatriate employees. However, the use of expatriates can mean that, not only are there important (if mainly temporary) improvements to the staff working in education, but also these expatriates take with them an understanding of that nation, and the nature of developing nations in general, when they return to their home countries. Such understandings may be of future benefit to developed–developing nation relations.

Another important way in which attempts have been made to 'leap frog' some of the stages of educational development has been to 'import' distance-education courses and/or to establish local systems of distance education. Unlike with the expatriate educational staff, distance-education imports do not have to face the 'reality' of the local culture and language because the course materials were developed for use in a particular developed nation. The curriculum that is imported may be extremely resistant to local modification and, therefore, the problems of forms of cultural imperialism are quite profound. Even the development of local distance-education materials relies on the sorts of technological, transport and communications infrastructure which many developing nations either do not possess or do not have extending into the rural areas where most often the need for educational development is greatest. Typical problems centre on: the supply of electricity, reliable and frequent postal services, the availability of adequate qualities and quantities of paper, the capacity to print cheaply and reliably and so on. The use of other technologies such as telephone, audiocassette and video cassette is also difficult for developing nations. Yet so many of these elements are taken for granted as fundamental to distance education as it is practised in the developed world to the extent that it could be said that distance education is, in fact, a form of education which is an artefact of developed nations; it is almost as if it could be one of the characteristics one might use to decide whether a nation had reached a 'developed' state or not.

In addition to the infrastructural difficulties that one can see to varying degrees in developing nations there are also the crucial matters of language and culture. In most developing countries local languages are used in schooling, sometimes with another colonially derived language used as a common national language or as a 'language of trade and international relations'. Local languages, whether they are used formally at school or not, are often only spoken and, certainly amongst the older generations, literacy can be non-existent in many communities. These local cultures are oral cultures in the sense that the communities 'teach' each other aspects of the culture through oral and physical (e.g. dance and ceremonial) means. The problems for distance education in these circumstances are enormous.

Distance education in developed nations is usually based on one or two of the official national languages which are spoken, written and read throughout those nations. In developing countries the declaration of a national language or languages is itself fraught with political difficulties because any such declaration is a statement about the domination (and the heightening of the processes of domination) of a particular indigenous or colonial language. The developing nations' need to preserve indigenous traditions and cultures rests on the use of indigenous language; the developing nations' 'need' to develop depends on the capacity to use and integrate development technologies, industries and cultures, which means a foreign language, frequently English. Distance education applies considerable pressure on developing nations to become mono-lingual, especially in terms of English. One can see the *Commonwealth of Learning* adding a multinational pressure towards this form of linguistic conformity.

This is not to suggest that forms of distance education cannot be developed which have a less serious effect on the local languages and cultures of developing nations and, indeed, it should be possible to develop distance-education approaches which uses oral and diverse languages both to preserve indigenous culture and enable the people to develop their lives in keeping with forms of development. Probably we might not call such approaches 'distance education', but there could well be a variety of hybrid pedagogies which draw on distance education as well as traditional indigenous means of teaching. However, we should recognise that Western distance education has enormous potential to cement in place a contemporary form of cultural and economic imperialism in developing nations.

In conclusion, I shall introduce the two authors for this section. Kwasi Ansu-Kyeremeh completed his PhD at La Trobe University based on a study of educational media use in Ghana; he has been involved in matters close to the hearts of many distance educators ever since. Kwasi has written a critical overview of distance education in Ghana which provides an insight into the issues which other developing nations face.

Richard Guy has written a critical essay on distance education in developing nations. Richard was director of the Advanced Diploma Unit at the Goroka Campus of the University of Papua New Guinea at the time of writing and has since moved to the Port Moresby campus of the University. The Advanced Diploma Unit is funded by the government to provide distance-education courses for secondary teachers across Papua New Guinea to improve their knowledge and skills. Richard has also worked in the Northern Territory of Australia on programs with Aboriginal people. He has completed postgraduate work using action research on the Advanced Diploma program and is currently a PhD student at Deakin University doing research into the relationship between distance-education pedagogies and indigenous cultures in Papua New Guinea. It is this background which Richard brings to bear in his critical essay which provides many links with the relevant literature in the field.

CHAPTER 7

DISTANCE EDUCATION IN A DEVELOPING CONTEXT: GHANA

KWASI ANSU-KYEREMEH

DISTANCE EDUCATION IS CRITICALLY examined here in the context of a developing African nation, Ghana. The modes, methods and structures of distance education in that country are described and analysed against the background of the country's educational needs, educational infrastructure, and the communication problems between educators and learners. In Ghanaian education terms, the concepts distance education and adult education interrelate so closely that they could be interchangeable from various perspectives. Their interchangeability might not be unrelated to the background of Western education in the country.

Ghana (known as Gold Coast until independence in 1957), covers a land mass of 238 533 square kilometres (92 098 sq.m.) around the intersection of longitude 0 degrees and latitude 5 degrees north on the Atlantic coast of West Africa. Its population is slightly smaller than that of Australia and about half that of Canada. with an estimated 13.5 million in 1988 and is growing at 3% per annum according to the 1984 census. The population is composed of many ethno-linguistic groups, the largest cluster, the Akans, making up about 44% of the population. English is the official language and the language for instruction in schools. The country's cocoa monocrop agricultural economy, supplemented with other primary products from extraction industries, is very fragile. National budgets in the 1980s have often shown a staggering 60 to 80% of foreign exchange earnings going towards international debt servicing following the adoption of World Bank/IMF structural adjustment programs.

Western education began in Ghana in the fashion of a one-room school in 1529. The first school was housed in one of the many European forts and castles on the country's coastline. By independence, schooling had supplanted the indigenous pre-European education systems to become the main socialisation institution for those who attended it. A number of reasons account for the demand, justification, and need for out-of-school, including distance, education which have arisen out of the superimposition of schooling on indigenous education.

NEED FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Ghana pioneered government-sponsored secondary education in Sub-Saharan Africa in the early 1930s. The country was among the three countries (Kenya and Malawi being the other two) in which more than 40% of the population had primary education at independence; and, in fact, it was the only one in which the proportion of the population with secondary education exceeded 10%. Secondary school retention rates in the Australian states of New South Wales and Victoria in the mid-1950s were 9.92% and 6% respectively (Glover 1990, p.23). Despite these early achievements, there has always been a strong demand for education in Ghana outside the classroom due to the inability of formal schooling to satisfy demand. Both the Watson (Great Britain 1948) and Botsio (Ghana 1961) commissions of inquiry noted such demand. In 1936, educational demand so exceeded resources that the British educationist Revd A.G. Fraser forecast universal primary education to be achievable in as long as 700 years time (Obe 1986, p.782). A few years later, the Watson Commission (Great Britain 1948) similarly observed that educational facilities were too few and the rate of their increase too slow. The Commission further noted 'full development of universal primary education would take at least twenty years to achieve if finance and other factors are taken into consideration'. To increase access it recommended 'the provision of part-time education for those who cannot find places in senior primary or secondary schools' (Great Britain 1948, p.64). Providing part-time education was to 'have the highest priority in the extension of educational facilities'.

In the 1970s, George (1976), on her part, observed alarming rates of attrition, a lot of it at the selection bottleneck at the primary–secondary transition point. Actually, in 1984, *West Africa* (8 Oct., p.2060) reported that of the 100 000 candidates who took the Common Entrance Examination for selection to secondary schools, only 25 000 gained admission. This limited access is often compounded by the combined factors of lack of finance on the part of poor but bright children, and lack of places in the schools. It is estimated that 'of the 2.2 million children in primary school, only an average 25 000 enter secondary schools annually and less than a quarter of that figure enter sixth form. Of that quarter, only half of them, some 2400 enter the universities' (*West Africa*, 3502, 1 Oct. 1984, p.2013). Arnold (1989, p.390) recently observed 'school dropout figures reached an alarming 40–60%, with a corresponding rise in child labour'. A 1987 Junior Secondary School (JSS) reform designed to stem the bottleneck wastage is yet to impact on the problem. In the area of staffing, teacher upgrading programs have become imperative in recent times with the percentage of unqualified primary school teachers falling to as low as 50% according to Morna (1989, p.34). Such unfavourable educational statistical indicators point to the remedial and continuing out-of-school educational needs of the nation.

The problem of limited access to in-classroom formal education extends into higher education. In 1961, the Botsio international Commission on University Education recommended the provision of facilities 'for students who wish to work for degrees on part-time basis' (Ghana 1961, p.22). And before 1962 when part-time General Certificate of Education (GCE) courses were introduced, the younger literate population 'clamoured for certificate courses as a stepping stone for better jobs' (Opare-Abetia 1979, p.45). A pass in the GCE has always been a criterion for upward occupational mobility, in the form of promotion in the civil service and teaching, and for entry into the officer class of the police and armed forces.

There is also the intractable literacy problem. A Ghana Living Standards Survey conducted in 1988 indicated that about 70% of the population were unable to read and write (*West Africa*, 3712, 3 Oct. 1989, p.182), a figure which always has governments worried. With formal schooling resources incapable of dealing with the problem, it has become necessary for alternative means to be sought to raise literacy levels. Connected to the problem of illiteracy is the need to offer non-credit education to the general population in areas such as health and nutrition, farming techniques, and mobilisation for community development programs.

Nyerere (1967, p.14) worried that Tanzania, a 'young and poor nation is taking out of productive work some of its healthiest and strongest young men and women'. His concern resonates in Ghana where parents' desire to remove their children from school to assist them on the farm, or in their work, contributes significantly to high drop-out rates and to an exacerbation in child labour problems. The two situations reminds one of the notion of earnings forgone during full-time schooling years as a national economic loss in Theodore Schultz's (1977) human capital theory. Where distance education is coterminus with part-time study, earning while learning becomes an incentive for mitigating the costs to the nation of earnings forgone. These schooling conditions, better than others in Africa and similar to what prevails in many parts of the developing world, underline the need for alternative educational programs at the individual, community and national levels in the pursuit of the educational, political, and economic goals of the country. In the view of Ansere (1982) conditions of that nature must lead to an 'inevitability of distance education'. What such distance-education strategies have been adopted to meet these educational needs in Ghana are discussed next.

DISTANCE-EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Extra-classroom educational facilities in Ghana are often formulated more in the context of part-time study than distance study which means there is greater emphasis on providing facilities as close to in-classroom pedagogy as possible. Consequently, part-time study tends to be interpreted more in terms of extra face-to-face classes organised outside the normal school system to the extent that there are more classroom-based evening-class workers' colleges, adult education classes, adult residential colleges, and night schools for village literacy classes than distance teaching and learning programs. This is particularly true in the case of academic- or credit-oriented continuing, remedial and basic education courses. However, a small-scale correspondence-mode distance education is provided at the secondary and tertiary levels of formal schooling. Media-based (radio, cinema, television, video, and cassette tape) non-academic distance-education programs which are organised in campaign formats also exist.

Forms of distance education

Ansere (1979, p.15) distinguished between a 'formal educational system' and a 'non-formal educational system which includes face-to-face evening classes and correspondence courses' in Ghana, a distinction akin to what Perraton (1982a, p.19) identified as 'orthodox education' and 'distance education'. Academic and non-academic (Ampene 1979b) is another differentiation; and so is credit and non-credit distance education. Academic or credit distance education in Ghana includes examinable secondary school courses, university degree courses and the modular teacher-targeted program identified by Carr (1987). Non-academic or non-credit distance education includes agricultural extension schemes such as the Upper Region Agricultural Development Project (URADEP) and the ministry of agriculture operated extension programs, radio and television programs, and family planning education programs. Correspondence courses, the only type of distance-education program offered by the Institute of Adult Education (IAE) of the University of Ghana, dominate mainstream distance-educational practice and these will be examined next.

Correspondence courses

Ampene (1979a, p.50) categorised correspondence education in Ghana by organizational method into those provided by the government and non-profit organizations and those provided by voluntary and profit-making agencies. This has been the case in the 1980s. The IAE, profiled by El-Bushra (1976), runs correspondence programs for secondary school courses. At various stages, the British-originated Rapid Results College, Wolseley Hall, Metropolitan Correspondence School and the US-based International Correspondence School, all private organisations, also offered secondary-level correspondence education. Professional studies in accountancy and banking are also offered by mail. Other courses are provided by religious organisations.

The voluntary correspondence-education providers are often based overseas, or have overseas connections. Perhaps more fortuitously for themselves than by design, the foreign-based correspondence schools, through the content and method of their courses, aided the colonial paternalistic propagation of what, in Rodney's (1972) opinion, was 'education for underdevelopment'. And a paternalistic pattern of knowledge transfer in which the experts claim knowledge monopoly of the learner's needs and means for satisfying such needs and in which the teacher is the custodian of all knowledge (Illich 1971), is discernible. Furthermore, Ansere (1982) found overseas-based correspondence schools also to be agents for siphoning scarce foreign exchange into the metropole.

Characteristics of Ghanaian correspondence education

(a) Courses offered in all correspondence education in Ghana are geared towards certain examinations.

The IAE prepares its correspondence students for the GCE Ordinary and Advance Level examinations which are conducted twice a year by the West African Examinations Council. Both examinations are selection instruments for admission to further-education courses. The GCE Ordinary Level serves as a basis for selection to post-secondary teacher-training colleges, nurses-training colleges, polytechnics, and others such as the forestry school and agricultural colleges. Good passes in at least four subjects (plus a compulsory pass in English Language) are a mandatory requirement for university admission. The Advance Level GCE is the major requirement for University entrance and serves as the selection criteria for other higher education institutions such as the Institute of Professional Studies, Advanced Teachers College, the Technical Teachers College, the Specialist College (for sports, physical education, art and craft, and home economics teachers), and the School of Music. Those students who undertake professional correspondence courses are prepared for the examinations leading to membership of the respective professions. These examinations include the London City and Guilds, banking, and accountancy qualifications.

(b) Teaching and learning methods employed by the various correspondence schools are based on the mail system.

Apart from certain instances when the IAE organises periodic face-to-face 'schools' for its students, its lessons are conducted chiefly by correspondence of the type Holmberg (1989, p.4) describes as 'pre-produced courses' in a textbook-starved nation (Crowder 1986). Course writers write course books of text and exercises which are mailed to students. 'Lessons are written not by a team of writers but by single writers' (Ansere 1982, p.54); an approach which is more individualised from the educator's perspective compared with the course-team approach pioneered by the Open University (UK) and used to varying degrees by Deakin University and the University of South Australia. After studying the text and doing the exercises accompanying them, students mail the assignments back to the agency running the course for teachers to read, assess and make comments which are then mailed back to the students. There is a conspicuous absence of media-oriented support activities to the printed text and exercises. The approach typifies a classical individual study situation in which the learner is isolated from his or her peers, an isolation akin to the idea of Bååth (1981) that physical interaction between educator and learner is unnecessary in distance education.

Features of this typical 'teaching' situation include delayed student response to teacher's questions (with instantaneous spontaneity totally missing), largely one-way linear communication which stifles useful discussion which discourages peer discourse, and the encouragement of total dependency of students on teachers. Perhaps the greatest default of the method is the rote-learning that the examination-tailored content and the rigid text and exercises encourage. Many correspondence students, especially those with only elementary school background know little beyond rote learning methods. One would assume then that the next level of study they engage in would attempt to redress the shortcoming and introduce them to some critical thinking, and exploratory, discovery and problem-solving methods of learning.

(c) Patrons are principally those who either failed to gain admission into institution-based courses or were unsuccessful in attaining required pass grades upon completion.

Theoretically, there are 'no entry requirements' for admission into a correspondence program (Ansere 1979, p.16). However, 'the prospective student must have such level of literacy and numeracy [in English] as would enable him [or her] to follow the course' (Ansere 1979, p.16). Paradoxically, this literacy requirement for correspondence education finds an expression of the biblical dictum of 'to those who have more shall be added' for the Ghanaian illiterate majority.

Although there are a large number of middle-school leavers among the GCE O-level correspondence students (mainly as a result of the high rate of attrition at the middle–secondary transition point), many more are secondary school dropouts, those who have completed secondary school but failed at their first attempt at the examination, and those who have completed secondary school but did not secure the required pass grades.

Narrowly defined by pure examination-measured standards, these types of correspondence students are intellectually second-rate compared with their counterparts who succeeded through conventional schooling. In his critical essay in this book, Guy cites Ghana as one of the countries where distance education is perceived with less regard. Incidentally, the association of distance study with mediocre learning achievement is not restricted to the developing context. In fact, in the Canadian Province of Alberta, the education authorities insist in the document *Teacher Certification – Alberta* (mimeo, n.d., p.2) that 'professional teacher education courses completed by correspondence will not be accepted for certification purposes'.

The pattern also depicts Ghanaian correspondence education as functionally remedial and meliorative. Holmberg's (1977) rationale of correspondence education for people who miss out on school or university for financial, social, geographical or medical reasons, therefore, largely applies, although it is principally cognitive learning which is provided and not psychomotor or affective learning.

d) Preparation and administration of correspondence education is centralised.

Ansere (1979, p.17) observed that 'the teaching and administration of the correspondence program are centralised'. Although he was referring to the organisational structure of the IAE, centralisation is a feature of the operations of the other organisations involved in correspondence education. Courses are planned, written, mailed out, and collected for assessment and evaluation at a central point which is sometimes located overseas.

Non-academic distance education

There is a tendency to equate distance education in many developing contexts with non-academic educational programs which are offered through the mass media. For example, these programs dominate the 'distance-teaching projects' identified by Young *et al.* (1980). Non-credit distance education in Ghana preceded correspondence education by several decades. In 1952, a multimedia literacy education project was initiated through the radio, cinema, and newspapers (Gold Coast 1952). The timing of the scheme compares with the introduction of school sessions in radio 3LO's programming in 1929 and the 'Learning English' radio classes for migrants in 1953, both in Australia. Even before then, Smyth (1983) and Morton-Williams (1952) observed cinema-based colonial education. More recently, the radio and television media have mounted several educational projects including programs which focus on health and nutrition, literacy, and agricultural techniques. The most prominent among them is URADEP which is operated through FM broadcast and the education for community development project operated by the School of Communication Studies of the University of Ghana. The author recently examined some nine such projects for his doctoral thesis. Aspects of his findings appear here where relevant.

By far, the most widely publicised distance-education project in the country has been the radio-based program, *Rural Radio Forum*. Works by Dodds (1972) and Coleman and Opoku (1968), explored its historical background, its processes, and its impact. Dodds observed that the Ghanaian experiment was to serve as a model for the rest of Africa. The concept itself was transplanted from Canada with the collaboration of Unesco and the assistance of countries such as Canada and Australia. The first producer was trained in Australia and some technicians received their training in Canada. As observed by Ugboajah (1985, p.324), and supported by Hedebro (1982) and Stover (1984), such imported program 'formats are part of hardware and professional training'. Transplantation in general has been found to be an encapsulation of concept, content, expertise, and material inputs. Besides a critical analysis of radio-based distance education by Ansu-Kyeremeh (forthcoming), various mass-media-oriented distance-education programs have been described or evaluated by Boafo (1984) and Obeng-Quaidoo (1987).

Program features

In considering planning and implementation, media types used, communication processes involved, extent of outreach, topics and subjects covered, and learning outcomes of Ghanaian non-academic distance education, certain features emerge across programs and schemes. There is little evidence of intensive, in-depth and detailed formative research to establish learners' educational needs and their possible contributions to securing the necessary apparatuses, including means of communication, that would most effectively satisfy those needs. The colonial pattern whereby programs were 'imposed' on the assumption that they would work, as Morton-Williams (1952) observed with the application of cinema to village education, still persists. There is much more summative research but even then these are not designed to elicit learner participation in program implementation.

Perhaps this lack of learner contribution to the education process accounts for the extensive reliance on technology-based means of communication which, as found by the author, were either unprocurable or unsuited to the local socio-cultural structures. All the educators interviewed in his study preferred to use radio, television, video, cinema, and other technological media at the same time that they displayed little knowledge of the educationally functional characteristics of the indigenous communication systems. Because of the dominance of the technology-based media, communication tends to be linear, overly impersonal, and is without feedback mechanisms that would encourage learner contribution.

Accompanying to the dearth in the technology-based communication facilities, is the geographical limitation to the outreach capacity of many programs. Outreach is linked to the ability of learners to obtain the means of program reception, an ability which is severely limited among the vast poor majority. For example, the author also found in his study that villagers interviewed knew nothing about the *Rural Radio Forum* which had been broadcast for almost 30 years. FM radio broadcasts introduced to improve outreach present their own technically oriented geographical limitations (Amakyi 1988); and mobile cinema vans no longer visit villages because of the lack of equipment. In a sense, geographical limitations translate into educational deprivation as it is the poor who are most unlikely to own or have access to the means of program reception.

1.4.4

Inequalities in terms of who has access to non-academic distance education are thus discernible in Ghana.

Also, because many of the programs are planned with minimal or no active input of learners, topics and subjects offered tend to be those that are important to the educators. The media-based programs select topics to suit their formats and being state-controlled are subject to the dominant government ideology as Althusser (1971) would put it. Donor agencies often determine topics since their programs are message-based meaning they have certain ideas that they would want to *pump* – the actual term used by the British administrator of the 1952 literacy campaign – into villagers' heads. Family planning, so important to the IMF and the World Bank, is thus a popular distance-education subject for aid donors while cultural rejuvenation, crucial to national rediscovery as a basis for maximising available resources, receives very little attention, even when Ali Mazrui (1991) and others consider economic development to be predicated upon cultural factors.

Educational programs of the distance learning and teaching type adopt the methodology of the extension (an approach advocated for by the Watson report) model as defined by Freire (1981); and they are diffusionist. The author found in his doctoral study that all the schemes he surveyed adopted the extension and diffusionist approaches. In Freire's (1981, pp.95, 143) thinking, extension engenders knowledge 'transmission, delivery, mechanical transfer' and 'cultural invasion' and 'has the tendency to use the methods of propaganda and persuasion'. On the other hand, his preferred method, knowledge communication 'implies reciprocity', has 'no passive subjects', 'is dialogue', and 'cannot ignore totally socio-cultural conditioning' (Freire 1981, pp.138, 143). It is communication then, which enables learners to participate actively in the shaping of their own learning, a fact not recognised by Ghanaian distance-education practitioners.

The diffusion of innovation approach of Rogers (1962) has also been criticised by Hutton and Cohen (1975, p.116) as making 'no attempt to justify the central role cultural factors play in his analysis', implying that his vertical communication of new ideas model is unsuitable in the Ghanaian socio-cultural context. Responding to the US withdrawal from Unesco, Ugboajah (in *Journal of Communication* 1984, vol.34, no.4, p.105), from a general non-Western cultural context, criticised the proponents of modernisation-derived concepts which include extension and diffusion for spreading:

> ... dubious theories of the 'passing of traditional societies', of urbanisation leading to modernisation, of westernisation leading to civilisation, of metropolitanism leading to development and adoption of innovations, of high correlations of radio sets, television sets, copies of newspapers, and cinema seats with certain population units leading to economic and social progress in society. Such research theories and concepts succeeded in

> selling costly equipment, 'expertise', and propaganda but resulted in revolutions of rising frustrations and a trend toward socio-economic deterioration in Africa and many other Third World countries, with neither development or modernisation in sight.

Among modernisation proponents may be counted Lerner (1958, 1967) and Inkeles and Smith (1974) who regard westernisation as a prerequisite for development, a position Inayatullah (1967) rejected because he believed there must be input of non-western cultures into world culture. In the Ghanaian situation extension and diffusion have proven (as have their accompanying projects) to be prototypical concepts imported from elsewhere in the industrialised world and implemented with logistical, manpower and infrastructural support of overseas donor agencies. Such intensive foreign involvement reflects Ansere's (1979, p.14) notion of 'indigenous' as 'prepared and administered in Ghana', but not necessarily endogeneously derived, and therefore without sensitivity toward structure, content and method derived from the socio-cultural context in which the education system operates.

The dominant medium is the radio; although in the pre-1966 era, the cinema was a major channel. Then, as in a few cases now, loud-speaker mounted mobile cinema vans undertook countrywide tours to show educational films on subjects such as cocoa disease control, causes and prevention of mosquito-carried malaria, and community mobilisation for development. Radio assumed the principal role as cinema resources dwindled and television outreach was restricted to a few urban centres in the wake of fast declining foreign exchange earnings. In recent times, the radio cassette-recorder and video have been used. Their use, however, is restricted and isolated.

Essential features of Ghanaian distance education

From the above description of distance education as has been and continues to be practised in Ghana one notices a clear distinction between the type of educational service and the mode of communication. Programs geared toward formal qualifications are principally by mail and are offered face to face or through correspondence. Non-credit education on the other hand is undertaken through the mass media is not institutionalised, and targets the predominantly illiterate rural population.

In a broader perspective, the practice of distance education in Ghana is characterised by the absence of an endogeneously-generated theoretical framework which would take account of local conditions – a situation created mainly by the lack of research. There is a strong incidence of dependency, given the extensive transplantation of models, concepts, expertise, and technological hardware from the industrialised world. Another consequence of the 'imports dependency syndrome', as is manifested in the importation of every form of technical equipment from transmitters through receiving sets to ordinary size AA and D batteries, is the excessive centralisation of program organisational structures and administrative and bureaucratic procedures which have engendered centrifugal decision-making processes. The centralisation also discourages learner participation and input into objectives, needs, and content at both the planning and implementation stages of programs. Within the less than a fifty-kilometre radius, thirty-six-village location of the author's research referred to earlier, he found nine fragmented agencies offering similar (in some cases identical) programs, sometimes from the same location (and premises) without any coordination.

Teaching and instruction in both institutionalised and non-institutionalised distance education in Ghana are andragogical, that is they are more adult-centred than person-centred; although they tend to retain some of the methodologies of pedagogy. Their instructional processes, however, do not emphasise the 'adult's role in being actively involved in deciding learning needs and developing teaching–learning transactions' that Moore and Waldron (1981, p.19) associate with andragogy. They are also without the type of experiential learning Heron (1989) believes must constitute an important element in adult-focused education.

Problems of distance education

An 'inadequate and inefficient mailing system in the country' which caused delays of up to four weeks to deliver a lesson was identified by Ansere (1979, p.17) as the one influence on the IAE to centralise the operation of its correspondence courses. Poor mailing facilities are however just a small part of the global problem of inadequate finance that confronts distance educators worldwide. Although like many developing countries Ghana is lacking in some aspects of technical expertise in the development of technology-oriented distance-education programs, the greatest handicap is in the dearth of technological hardware. In fact, in the academic-oriented higher-education sector, there is a total absence of telepedagogy techniques (including teleconferencing and videoconferencing) which are in vogue in many industrialised countries. Even simpler modes such as radio talk-back facilities used in the University of New England two-way program described by Arger (1989), are unavailable. The absence of these vital techniques, *sine qua non* for generating two-way communication and interaction between educator and learner and learners among themselves, exacerbates the problem of linear communication which promotes didactic teaching methods.

Ansere (1979, p.14) noted that 'the Institute [IAE] had wanted, right from the onset, to incorporate radio and television components in the correspondence program, but these too were suspended. It was felt at the time that with radio and television, the program might be too complicated for the small and relatively inexperienced staff to handle'. That that aspect of the program has still not materialised over a decade later is attributable less to technical knowledge than equipment supplies. Ofori-Ansa's (1983) overview of technological problems as they affected education in Africa applied to Ghana. Ordinary radio and television sets are so expensive that it would take a minimum wage earner well over two months' salary to buy a radio set and almost ten times that to be able to buy a television set. *West Africa* (no. 3804, 23 July 1990, pp. 2152 & 2168) quoted a daily minimum wage of C218 as against the prices of a radio set and a television set of C20 000 and C196 000 respectively. In Australia, an eight-hour daily minimum wage would buy a radio set while such a fortnightly wage would purchase a small colour television.

The author found that conditions for the acquisition and methods of application of the technological communication systems in the rural areas were worse. Not only were telephone facilities absent, radio sets were in scarce supply; mobile cinema facilities accessible up to the mid-1960s were no longer visiting; television and video were hardly known; and accessories to operate these (the villages had no electricity) such as dry cells were either too expensive or unavailable for purchase. Even where these odds have been overcome in a way, it was found that socio-cultural incongruities in the communication formats adopted with local conditions reduced any educational benefits to the minimum. Given that the non-academic distance education offered in the country, and which mainly targets villagers, depends largely on the technology-based mass media for communication with learners, one cannot belittle the inconsequence of these programs.

Distance education or distance schooling?

Indeed, it would seem that in Ghanaian distance-education practice, 'there is a missed opportunity for a kind of education that is not based on schools or colleges' as Perraton (1982a, p.17) believes is the case with other distance-education models. This may be attributable to the conceptualisation of distance education not as autonomous means, form, or system of education but as an ancillary and complementary strategy which derives its legitimacy through its links with formal schooling. The inherent tendencies (some incidental, some manifest, some latent) described above make one wonder whether distance education is not close enough to schooling to be represented as 'distance schooling'. 'Deschooling' as proposed by Illich (1971) would be of relevance as a critical framework in such an interpretation of distance education.

In the prioritisation of national, community and individual educational needs and functions on the basis of declared and undeclared objectives, one can deduce a close linkage between the two forms of education. The concentration of effort by the IAE on remedial continuing academic education through the offering of post-literacy courses aimed at passing examinations renders its function to be meliorative and principally complementary to conventional schooling. This is further reinforced by its lack of effort in literacy education. Over a decade ago, Ampene (1979a, p. 52) observed that 'the major issue of adult education in

West Africa is, of course, illiteracy'. Today's relevance of his observation lies in the current 30% literacy rate quoted above. The emphasis on qualifications through examinations, or the diploma disease as Dore (1976) puts it, cultivates elitism and promotes the reproductive functions of schooling identified by Weis (1979), even if it nominally creates few chances.

In their instructional methods, Ghanaian distance educators tend to employ as much a didactic approach as do teachers in the classroom. The author observed in his above-cited study that the teaching method of radio-based programs was more akin to what Allen and Anzalone (1980, p.5) term as 'reproduction of the dull teacher monologue format over the airwaves'. In an Australian example, Modra (1989) recounts how an attempt to substitute unstructured text for the conventional monologic media was aborted because college authorities considered the approach inappropriate. This demonstrates how distance education in general is susceptible to the rigidity of the teaching and instruction methods adopted in formal schooling.

Given the above circumstances, one wonders whether the enthusiasm for distance education in Ghana (as Ansere expressed in 1979 and passionately advocated for in 1982) is no more a desire for 'a symbol of modernity' than a genuine attempt at achieving universal access to a type of education which also meets individual, community and national educational needs. Actually, there is a tendency among educationists such as Ansere (1982, p.53) to represent correspondence education as distance education. He had stated that 'Ghana made its official debut in distance education in November 1970 when the Correspondence Education Unit was established by the Institute of Adult Education, University of Ghana'. It has already been pointed out that cinema- and radio-based education long preceded this.

The emphasis on academic distance education also has the potential of a narrow definition of education as schooling because it reflects the finding by Browne (1981) that Ghanaian schools overemphasised cognitive learning while discouraging the promotion of indigenous utilitarian education which encouraged the learning of vocational skills. Furthermore, despite the observation by Holmberg (1977) that distance education has the capacity for education encompassing the learning of cognitive and some psychomotor skills, structured distance education in Ghana, especially as provided by the IAE, follows the cognitive only general education patterns adopted in the schooling model.

The indigenous factor

In a sense, one may argue that the shortcomings of distance education as conceptualised and practised in Ghana are related to the inability of educationists and educators to take cognisance of the deep-rooted traditions of Ghanaian indigenous education. The characteristics of indigenous education have been summarised as: collective or communalistic and deeply democratic; intimately tied to practical tasks of day-to-day living and involve learning social relations and spiritual concerns. Indigenous education is also a lifelong experience (Bentsi-Enchill 1971; McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh 1975; Majasan 1982). A consideration for these in the formulation of distance-education models could lead to a radio program broadcast with indigenous organised social groups as targets instead of creating superficial radio listeners' clubs of the type described by Buxton (1978) and Obeng-Quaidoo (1987). The radio club strategy epitomises a trend of community institutional transformation to suit the characteristics of technology-based media in order to procure lesson effectiveness instead of communication being organised in response to community characteristics.

Another example would be the IAE building on its 'decentralisation' approach which encouraged greater face-to-face contacts between educators and learners by utilising indigenous communication systems. As the author observed in his thesis, the centripetal indigenous social interaction patterns buttressed the communication and democratic aspects of indigenous education. Contrary to this, Ansere (1979) noted that inadequate mailing facilities singularly contributed to the IAE abandoning its local emphasis and decentralised operations, even though the emphasis encouraged educator–learner contacts, in favour of centralisation which created a communication gulf between learners and educators. Before that change of strategy, the Watson Commission (Great Britain 1948, p.32) had long observed 'the principal vehicle of information to large masses of the people is still the lorry driver'. And Ripley (1978, p.19) later confirmed 'one medium of traditional communication I have found to be used adequately is the trader and the lorry driver'. These are communication vehicles the IAE could have cheaply and conveniently canvassed to improve its mailing system. By ignoring these facilities, the IAE inadvertently traded the ever elusive student–teacher interactive contacts for administrative expediency. In another sense, independent learning in which the individual develops their own thought processes in a form of mental isolation seems to be confused with individualised learning in which the individual physically isolates themself from peers and educators. Perraton (1979), for example, believes indigenous learning among many developing societies are group-oriented and could contradict individualised distance learning.

Generally, little attention is paid to identifying the educational potential of indigenous communication media systems in educational research in Ghana and Africa. Official Ghanaian policy towards the systems advocates the 'adaptations of these for the mass media' (Ghana 1975, p.210). This is in spite of findings by Bame (1975) and Ripley (1978) that the systems were effective educational channels. The author's thesis literature survey revealed that researchers would rather investigate ways of implanting sophisticated technology, the acquisition of which is beyond national resources; and even when, as Stover (1984) rightly posits, media do not have to be technically sophisticated to be successful. The works of

Coleman and Opoku (1968), Boafo (1984) and Obeng-Quaidoo (1987) are examples. In contrast, research in Asia on communication in distance education tends to emphasise the limits and possibilities of indigenous communication systems. Evidence of this is extant in the articles carried by *Media Asia* which is published by the Asian Centre for Mass Communication Research. Researchers who investigate the application of communication technology do so with caution over the purported *universally applicable* attributes of those media and endeavour to establish their negative impact on the community rather than seek means of imposing them.

Actually, the notion of distance is not unfamiliar in many indigenous Ghanaian education systems; albeit distance in that context extends beyond physical separation of two elements in an educational process. Oppong (1973, p.44) noted among the Dagombas, for example, that children may be sent to distant places, or to distant relatives, to be raised; implying the removal from one's natural parents or village environment for the sake of better education. The practice is considered to be particularly useful in the training of potential political leaders or in the acquisition of special skills such as oratory, herbal medicine practice, and the performing arts.

Summary

An attempt has been made here to present evidence of induced- and felt-need-for distance education in Ghana's developing context. The historical background to distance education in the country, its structure, function, and method were all discussed. The discussion shows certain symptomatic weaknesses of distance education in general and in a developing African context in particular. Features observed include centralised structures, meliorative functions, 'second-rate' students, limited access and restricted patronage, and a dearth of technical communication equipment for technology-based courses and schemes. Perhaps more importantly, distance education in Ghana was also found largely to lack endogeneously generated concepts and structures and that this is one impediment to developing socio-culturally conscious distance-education programs and schemes with greater likelihood of success and enhanced access in the country.

The challenge to Ghanaian distance educators, and those operating in similar socio-cultural conditions, therefore, is to 'indigenise' or draw on local communication and social structures to develop endogeneous models of education that would cater to the large sections of the adult population who are illiterate, school dropouts (children or adults), and non-participant children in the schooling system, while ensuring that their traditional continuing education clientele are not forgotten.

CHAPTER 8

DISTANCE EDUCATION AND THE DEVELOPING WORLD: COLONISATION, COLLABORATION AND CONTROL

RICHARD GUY

INTRODUCTION

DISTANCE EDUCATION HAS EXPANDED at unprecedented rates since the 1960s in both the developed and developing worlds. Distance education in the developed world has been used mainly to assist people who are unable to take advantage of conventional education practices, who are seeking 'second-chance' education opportunities, who want to upgrade existing qualifications, who want to retrain for new work practices, or who want to participate in continuing education programs. The achievements of distance education in the developed world during this period include improvements in the quality of teaching materials (Zahlin 1988), the development of student support structures such as regional centres, study groups and tutorial assistance (Thorpe 1986), and the introduction of new 'interactive' technologies (Bates 1988a). The Open University, in the United Kingdom, has provided much of the inspiration for these developments. Early on, distance education in the developed world was considered on the 'periphery of education practices' (Perraton 1982a), but more recently, Nunan (1988) notes that distance education, in Australia at least, is increasingly considered by government as a mainstream educational practice.

In many parts of the developing world, distance education, rather than being a peripheral activity, has been very much in the centre of education practices (e.g. Kenya, Zimbabwe, Zambia). It is hardly coincidental that the growth in distance-education facilities in the developing world occurred at the same time as many countries gained independence from former colonial rulers. The education systems remaining were, more often than not, attuned to the needs of the colonial powers, and based on traditions which were consistent with the ruling country's view of the world (Gana 1984). Distance education has been adopted as one of the means to carry out the social policies of developing nations such as the democratisation of education, and economic policies aimed at national development. Distance education has been used to train the significant number of teachers needed to carry out the democratisation of education and employment opportunities in Zambia (Siaciwena 1988); it has been used to introduce school curricula to support a new political ideology in Zimbabwe (Sutherland 1982), and it has been used to develop vocational skills for health workers and agricultural extension workers in Kenya (Young *et al.* 1980). In those developing countries where distance education has not taken a central position, such as Papua New Guinea, it none the less shows all the potential of doing so, given emerging political, economic and social conditions. The College of Distance Education, which offers secondary education programs in Papua New Guinea, now has a greater enrolment than all of the country's high schools combined (Kaeley 1985), although funding arrangements have not increased to reflect this expansion in enrolments.

Developing countries with a longer history of independence have also undertaken extensive distance initiatives during the 1970s and 1980s. Secondary education institutions have emerged, such as the Air Correspondence High School in South Korea, the Open School in India, and the National Correspondence College in Zambia. Following the establishment of the Open University in the United Kingdom in 1969, 'open' style universities have been established in developing countries such as Venezuela, Thailand, China, Korea, India, Costa Rica, Iran, Indonesia and Sri Lanka. The impetus for opening these universities has been the apparent success of the Open University and the drive towards national development in the developing world. The Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) in India, for instance, aims 'to provide opportunities for higher education to a larger segment of the population' (Rumble 1986, p.51), and the Allama Iqbal Open University in Pakistan has as its objective, the provision of facilities 'to the masses for their educational uplift' (Rumble & Harry 1982, p.126). It is not just in the areas of secondary and tertiary education that distance education has grown, but some of the most innovative non-formal education programs have been initiated in the developing world. For instance, literacy programs in China, Cuba, Nicaragua and Tanzania have much to offer the developed world as it seeks solutions to its own growing rates of illiteracy.

Distance education in developing countries is significantly affected by social, cultural, political and economic contexts and by levels of planning, resource distribution and training. Nyirenda (1989) exemplifies many of these issues and highlights probably the most significant weakness of distance education in the developing world which is the lack of suitably trained indigenous personnel to maintain and initiate distance-education programs. There remains an over-reliance on overseas contract officers and few national officers are available or interested in developing careers in distance education.

It should not be assumed that developing countries have fondly embraced distance education. Indeed, the perception of distance education in some developing countries such as India, Brazil and Ghana is that it is an inferior form of education (Anderson 1982; Singh 1982), and is unacceptable to many employers in developing countries (Gitau 1982).

There has been a tendency in the past for the developing world to adopt uncritically successful educational practices from the developed world in the expectation that economic and social development will take place. There is considerable evidence to show that such a strategy does not ensure success (Todaro 1987). Often the infrastructure for educational innovation is lacking in the developing world. A stronger recognition of the contexts in which initiatives are situated in the developing world is beginning to emerge and from this may come the generation of appropriate and sensitive distance-education strategies. As a result of the rapid expansion of distance education in the developing world, educators have had to contend with a host of issues which were unforeseen. A range of responses have been developed. Some have been successful and others less so. Despite this experience, knowledge about the theory and practice of distance education remains problematic. Knowledge about distance education must be expanded if it is to maintain its prominent position in the developing world. Research is an important tool in this, but research that is more than just descriptions and evaluations of existing programs. A critical and reflective approach towards theory and practice (Evans & Nation 1989a) will strengthen our knowledge about distance education and develop a deeper understanding of the implications and outcomes of distance education in the developing world.

RESEARCH AND DISTANCE EDUCATION IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD

Generally supporters of distance education in the developing world write enthusiastically about its potential. Omolewa (1985) suggests that 'distance education is particularly mindful of assisting the underserved groups of people' (p.2) and goes on to claim that distance education in the developing world focuses on the 'hard-pressed', the 'underprivileged' and the 'oppressed', and results in the empowerment of the individual through the acquisition of knowledge. Similarly, Gana (1984) points out that 'Distance education provides a manageable solution for the democratisation and liberalisation of Education' (p.4) and Dewal (1988) claims that:

> ... the worldview is that it [distance education] is cost-effective, has a wide reach and is a liberal and individualized form of

> instruction. It provides freedom to the learner and helps him [*sic*] move at his own pace. It promotes social equity and supports national economies by taking education to the doorsteps of the workplace'. (Dewal 1988, p.63)

These statements make significant claims on behalf of distance education but they are somewhat misleading. If distance education were this effective then the solutions to the problems of the developing world would be in place but the economic and social gaps between the developed and developing worlds continue to widen (Chambers 1983). Regardless of this point, there is considerable evidence which suggests distance education has achieved a great deal in the developing world (Jenkins 1989a; Rumble 1989b). Teacher education, so important in development because it in turn enables the expansion of primary and secondary education opportunities is an interesting case in point. Mulenga (1987) reports that the University of Zambia's distance-education initiatives have resulted in increased enrolments and the achievement of external students is comparable to that of internal students. Carr (1987) reports that the modular distance teacher-training program in Ghana has resulted in an increase in the number of qualified teachers available to the system although 'their pass-rate in general was somewhat poorer than that of students who had taken the regular program' (p.51). Coldevin (1980) found that a distance program in Kenya successfully upgraded teachers to a higher level of teacher proficiency at a cost of about two-thirds of that spent on student teachers undergoing a traditional on-campus training program. Lalor and Marrett (1986) in their study of an in-service teacher education program in the West Indies conclude that examination results were on a par with their counterparts in full-time, college based courses and the faculty members were satisfied that standards had been maintained. Similarly, Brophy and Dudley (1983), in Guyana, found that distance-trained teachers are as good as the full-time on-campus trained teachers.

But offsetting this favourable literature are other studies which point to weaknesses in distance education. Kaye (1981b) describes a number of limitations of distance education which are relevant to the developing world. He suggests that there are limitations in being a distance student in terms of isolation from other students, teachers, libraries and learning aids, but importantly, not from distractions such as obligations to kin. He identifies limitations in being a distance teacher in the selection of knowledge and the organisation of material, and limitations associated with the system of distance education which tends to depersonalise education and is more concerned with training and instruction than the process of education. It is argued that the following literature more closely represents the reality of distance education in the developing world than some of the earlier literature mentioned. Gupta (1982) describes the limitations of distance teaching in India and lists nineteen issues such as the solitary nature of course preparation in which trialling and revisions of material are rarely carried out, the limited use of technology, institutions which cannot afford contact programs, almost non-existent research facilities, and correspondence educators, who lack formal training and often consider themselves inferior to their counterparts in the conventional system.

The Indira Gandhi National Open University was established in 1985 but initial course development was hasty and students found the materials unsatisfactory (Unesco 1983). More recently, Jenkins (1989b) notes that the development of IGNOU's student support systems has been difficult, and trained, local personnel are hard to locate. Sri Lanka's open university has attempted to translate teaching materials into local languages but faces problems in this especially in the sciences and there is a lack of experienced local educators to take on these activities. Vietnam has used distance education to promote its political ideology through re-education but shortages of paper have hindered progress (Unesco 1983). Nyirenda (1989) in a frank account of a distance-education program in Zambia highlights significant weaknesses in the development and production of curriculum materials, the distribution of materials, support structures for students and record keeping. Although Siaciwena (1988) refutes some of Nyirenda's claims, there is still sufficient evidence, even in Siaciwena's account, to indicate that distance-education programs in the developing world are significantly affected by the lack of infrastructure development for distance-education initiatives. Carr (1987) writing about an in-service, distance-teacher education program in Ghana notes that early teaching materials were inadequate, and the task of upgrading teachers all the more difficult, because of a shortage of locally trained personnel. More recently, distance materials in Ghana have developed more along the lines of conventional textbooks as face-to-face teaching becomes more important and the distance orientation of the program is being downplayed. These findings are very similar to those of the author (Guy 1988), writing about an upgrading teacher program in Papua New Guinea. Mulenga (1987) from Zambia notes that it is difficult to get academic staff to appreciate and to follow distance-teaching principles in dual-mode institutions and that they tend to rely on information extracted from existing texts and journals. Waqa (1984), at the University of the South Pacific, discusses the considerable pressure faced by on-campus lecturers in carrying out the dual role of on-campus teaching and extension work and how external course development is given a low priority. Lockwood *et al.* (1988), investigating the appropriateness of distance materials at the University of the South Pacific, showed that students performed at the reading level required by the materials in only one out of six external courses which were evaluated. Realism in course development is an important consideration in distance contexts where the majority of students study in a second or third language.

These accounts of research are significant because they provide evidence as to the lack of infrastructure development, such as materials production, organisational systems and training programs for national staff to support the rapid expansion of distance education that is taking place in the developing world. It is analogous to distance institutions failing to make provision for student support structures. If developing nations are to employ distance education in anything like its Western forms, then most will face the enormous financial and other costs of constructing an adequate infrastructure within which distance education can operate.

The research methodologies used in distance education in the developing world require reflection and critique. What are the most appropriate ways to understand the role and outcomes of distance education in the developing world? Mulenga (1987) suggests that the achievements of distance education should not be underestimated, but proceeds to list those achievements in terms of increasing enrolments and course offerings. This is rather superficial and fails to comprehend the more important issues such as the quality of teaching materials, the relevance of materials and courses to the contexts that surround distance education, and the relationships between distance education itself and individuals, groups and the social structures which make up society. Distance education has mostly escaped the critical analysis to which mainstream education practices have been subjected (Whitty 1985; Young 1971). This is a significant weakness in the evolution of distance education and this approach needs to be applied in order better to understand distance education in the developing world. There is insufficient knowledge about:

- the effects of technology in the developing world (Arnove 1976);
- how distance students process materials, especially when many of them are working in a second language (Watts 1981);
- about the learning styles of students in the developing world (McLaughlin 1988);
- the assumptions of distance education (Crooks 1983);
- the models of distance education which emphasise independence and autonomy (Moore 1977);
- the definition and ownership of knowledge and the potential for devaluing indigenous knowledge structures (Edwards 1989);
- the need to investigate the cultural contexts in which distance-education programs are situated (Guy 1990b);
- the role of distance education as a change agent and the potential for the 'internationalisation' of distance education (Nunan 1988).

Such critical issues are complex and relate directly to the contexts in which distance education is situated in the developing world.

THE CONTEXTS OF DISTANCE EDUCATION IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD

The physical contexts of distance education

In the 1950s, correspondence education, which relied solely on printed materials, was promoted as increasing access to education for people living in isolated areas. Ansere (1982) makes similar enabling claims when he suggests that distance education increases accessibility since it is not restricted by geography. The early literature in Papua New Guinea also argued that distance education was the most appropriate form of education to serve the interests of students who are distant from centres of learning (Lipscomb 1984). In Papua New Guinea some 80% of the population live in rural areas which are served by poorly developed roads and irregular postal services. The early claims for correspondence and distance education were misplaced because the very justification for these forms of education based on extreme isolation was the very reason for the lack of success in extending education to the isolated. But distance education, in Papua New Guinea, has evolved considerably over the past ten years. The establishment of study centres, compulsory residential schools, telephone counselling and tutoring, and locally based tutors are aimed at increasing the levels of social and academic integration of distance students with the teaching institution. The University of Papua New Guinea and the College of Distance Education have established these support structures in large urban areas and many courses are becoming increasingly dependent on face-to-face tutorials. Experience has shown that the inability of students to attend tutorials often results in failure in courses and those students who are unable to travel to these urban centres are being denied enrolment. Perraton (1982a), on the other hand, questions the value of distance-education study centres in the developing world, 'Gradually, the study centres can be improved with better buildings, more equipment, some training for their supervisors and so on. But with each improvement the study centre looks more like a school, albeit less well endowed than the proper schools, and typically, teaching those students who failed to get into a proper school' (p.17). Nunan (1988) suggests that the developments in student support structures in distance education represent approximations to mainstream educational practices and contends that the distinction between the two is becoming increasingly blurred. This is a growing issue which needs to be confronted by the developing world as it balances the claimed advantages of distance education with financial and pedagogical considerations.

Evans (1989b) discusses the relationship of distance and place in distance education. He suggests that this is little understood in the developed world but even less so in the developing world. It would appear though, that the spatial location of university centres in Papua New Guinea discriminates against non-urban dwellers. Women are particularly hampered in taking advantage of distance courses, because of requirements to attend sometimes lengthy and compulsory summer schools, and because of the continuing strength of traditional child care and domestic roles for women in Papua New Guinea (Wormald & Crossley 1988). It is worth recalling that in the developed world as well, there are groups of people such as rural residents, women and the economically disadvantaged who may not benefit from the existence of distance-education programs (Conboy & D'Cruz 1988). Distance education, rather than increasing access to education for isolated learners, may further marginalise them as it becomes an increasingly more urbanised form of education.

The social and cultural contexts of distance education

There is significant diversity in the developing world which centres around the social and cultural contexts within and between countries. This can be constraining as national systems try to respond through the centralised planning of education, rather than decentralised, locally based approaches. Groube (1985) describes the linguistic and cultural complexity of Papua New Guinea, 'this small fraction of the land surface of the earth contains over one-quarter of the world's languages, and if we could measure it properly, probably a third or more of the total cultural diversity in the world' (p.49). How does a political system respond to this level of diversity and what are the implications for distance education? The University of the South Pacific is a regional organisation catering for eleven independent countries and exemplifies the complexity of the provision of distance education in the developing world (Waqa 1984). The response of the University to this diversity has resulted in an extremely complex, multinational, multi-ethnic, multilingual structure which operates under enormous political pressures (Chick 1981). What are some of the effects of this social and cultural complexity on distance education? McLaughlin (1989) points out that the majority of distance materials are written in English but that attempts to translate materials into local languages is faced with the immense task of catering for the large number of dialects that exist in the developing world. Griffin (1981) is concerned about the effects that teaching materials, produced in a language that is often the second or even the third language of a student will have on local knowledge and ways of looking at the world and solving problems. Perraton (1979) suggests that traditional learning styles are group orientated in many parts of the developing world and questions the relevance of the basic individualised approach of distance education; and Jenkins (1981) reports on how farmers in Mali took a distance course designed for individualised study and adapted it to suit local collaborative learning styles. Holtzman *et al* (1975) suggest that the research priorities for distance education in the developing world may more appropriately lie in recognising that students from Western countries are competitive but students from the developing world are cooperative and trying to understand the implications of such cultural factors on learning, materials production and student retention rates.

The responsibility for coping with this complexity ultimately rests with people. Decisions will need to be made, for instance, about the maintenance of the cultural uniqueness of the developing world or the adoption of patterns of behaviour from other parts of the world. Distance education can play a prominent role in this. Distance teaching materials have been translated into many languages and a pedagogy of distance education could be formulated which recognises local cultural values and patterns. But at what cost and who makes these decisions? The issue of control and decision-making in distance education has not been sufficiently debated in the developing world.

The political contexts of distance education

Distance education in developing countries is predominantly a government financed activity and its expansion owes much to the willingness of governments to support distance education. Rumble (1986) notes the important role that politicians and academics can play in the development and maintenance of distance-education programs. Support for distance education within Papua New Guinea exemplifies this view. The National Department of Education directly funds the College of Distance Education and the Advanced Diploma in Teaching, an in-service, distance-education program for teachers. The Secretary of the Department has continually expressed the Department's support for these distance-education initiatives (Peril 1988). On the other hand, the support from academic staff at the University of Papua New Guinea for the Extension Studies Department was only token (Healey 1978) in the beginning but degenerated into 'obstruction of outreach activities' (Griffin 1984). More recently, Crossley (1989), notes an awakening of interest from the Vice-Chancellor's office of the University for extension studies although staffing and resource limitations continue to affect the expansion of off-campus education.

The dependency of distance education on government can be a constraining factor as well. The direction of distance education is heavily influenced by government and as a result there is scope for control and manipulation by government. For example, in 1981 the government of Zimbabwe had no hesitation in using distance education as a means to introduce its revolutionary ideology to teachers and students in the form of new curriculum and teaching materials (Mutumbuka 1987). Trillo (1982) reports on interference in the preparation and use of distance materials by various governments of Peru. This resulted in rewriting material several times before political regimes were happy with the material but on other occasions distance-education programs were closed down because of the unacceptable ideology in the materials. De Kadt (1970), in Brazil, reports on the antagonism of government officials towards the organisers of a radical, rural distance program which used radio and encouraged and supported the improvement of living conditions by direct action. Rumble (1983b) also reports examples of political interference in Iran and Colombia.

The political basis of distance education cannot be ignored. Few private distance-education organisations have been established in the developing world so government initiation of programs and funding arrangements are vital. The political make-up of governments influences the amount of resources available for distance education and how those resources are allocated. At present, the use of the majority of resources in the formal distance-education sector probably explains a great deal more about the views of government towards national development, and existing power structures within society, than about the role of distance education in the developing world.

Technological contexts of distance education

Some of the poorest countries in the developing world have access to sophisticated forms of technology. The University of the South Pacific, for instance, has had the free use of a satellite for educational purposes since 1974. The satellite was initially used for tutorial programs, administrative support, teleconferencing links between government agencies, and the development of regional information networks (Coldevin & Naidu 1989). This was taking place at a time when Bates (1980), then at the Open University in the United Kingdom, concluded that television was proving to be of less significance in teaching systems than was originally expected. At about the same time the University of the South Pacific began to reduce the amount of teaching by satellite because isolated students found it difficult to get to regional centres for broadcasts, and the majority of external students were located close enough to the main campus in Suva to attend face-to-face lectures. The University has expanded local-level initiatives through regional centres which are more attuned to community needs. Tutors are employed, lecturers travel from the main campus to regional centres, and the quality of written materials has been enhanced.

In other developing countries, technology and distance education have exhibited a similarly uneasy mix. Indonesia has also employed satellite technology to support its distance-education initiative since 1984 (APEID 1986) and television has been used to offset teacher shortages in countries such as Mexico (Young *et al.* 1980) and American Samoa (Arnove 1976). Hutchinson (1982) warns that the use of television has to be matched to the social and linguistic milieu of tertiary students in order to optimise the use of the medium. Yu Xu (1986) reports that a distance-education program incorporating a high level of television use has been an 'effective way to extend education to 80 per cent of China's population, thus contributing to economic development' (p.100), but reception is limited by the terrain and teaching materials consistent with the technology, remain to be developed (APEID 1986). Mulenga's (1987) conclusion that television is difficult to use in developing countries because of low ownership and the limitation of transmission to urban areas represents the reality for many developing nations.

In addition to the technological limitations of television in developing nations, a stronger research base is required to understand the implications of overseas television programs on indigenous cultures. Masland and Masland (1976) document how television in Samoa had deleterious effects on the traditional culture and that overseas consultants failed to recognise the differences between USA and Samoan cultures as reflected in the content of programs. The original project was redesigned to enable high-level decision-making to be carried out by Samoans and the primary use of English as the language of communication was de-emphasised. Research is also needed about the way that television itself is perceived and interpreted by people in developing nations. Especially in terms of: degrees of exposure to mass advertising, the serialisation of knowledge, special effects and the manipulative capabilities of editing. Hall (1987) outlines the paradox of technology for the developing world. He believes that the increasing demand for education in the developing world lends itself to telecommunications but the very infrastructure to support such technology cannot be afforded by those developing countries. He makes the point that much of the implementation of technology and research on the relationships between technology and distance education is in those developed countries for which technology in distance education 'is at best a supplementary, wholly optional medium for study' (p.55). Radio has proven to be the most useful, reliable and cheapest form of technology to enhance distance education. Given the financial constraints facing many developing countries it may be better for the developing world to promote the use of radio and the written materials that support it. Perhaps the most interesting use of radio, in terms of a critique of distance education, has been the Accion Cultural Popular (ACPO) in Colombia, which delivers primary and continuing education distance programs, and is based on the radical philosophy of education as an emancipatory tool for the liberation of oppressed groups in society (Brumberg 1975).

THE PROBLEMATICS OF DISTANCE EDUCATION IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD

There are significant levels of physical, linguistic, cultural, political and economic diversity within developing nations. The developing world lacks the relative homogeneity which characterises students, systems and societies found in the developed world. This partly explains some of the difficulties in implementing successful social and educational programs from one place to another in the developing world. In these contexts, the theory and practice of distance education is best considered as problematic. There are no guarantees or proven methods for success in dealing with problems in the developing world. Reflected within this diversity are responses to distance education which are at times arrogant and misconceived and result in failure (Siaciwena 1988). At other times, responses are sensitive and informed but none the less result in failure (Imhoof & Christensen 1986). This diversity and problematic nature should not be viewed as a disadvantage of distance education, but be recognised for what it is and used to refine and reconstruct the methodologies and pedagogies of distance education.

A deeper understanding is required of the implications and outcomes of distance education in the developing world. Dominant research approaches need to be critiqued to test the appropriateness of the assumptions and procedures that are contained in them as a means of exploring the issues confronting distance education in the developing world. The very process of critique, of course, embodies a Western research tradition and it is equally necessary for this to be debated as to its appropriateness in the developing world. The work of anthropologists in traditional societies (Carrier 1980; Gay & Cole 1967; Harris 1980) suggests that reflection and critique are uncharacteristic of traditional societies in which epistemology is conservative and knowledge is unquestioningly accepted. There is evidence that policy-makers and practitioners in the developing world do engage occasionally in reflection and critique (Matane 1986) but it may be constrained by the socialisation experiences of these people, who mostly represent privileged sections of society and, therefore, tends to be unrepresentative of the interests of the majority of the members of society.

All too often, the notions of rationality, efficiency and productivity which dominate in the developed world result in a technocratic orientation to problem solving and education. This orientation may not apply in the same way in the developing world. Distance education in the developing nations has tended to revolve around the establishment of a distance institution in the first instance, whose methodology and pedagogy is firmly based in a technocratic orientation. Learners in the developing world have no other alternative than to find ways to accommodate to the culture of the institution in these circumstances. It may be more appropriate to identify the cultures of the learners prior to the development of an institutional response so that it is sensitive to those cultural forms. What could emerge from such a conceptualisation of distance education is a stronger community orientation to education and development in the developing world. A community orientation would focus on issues and problems which are defined by the participants in programs, thereby, power and control would rest with those most affected. It may consist of a methodology which emphasises the 'openness' of distance education, rather than the separation of teacher and learner, and a pedagogy which focuses on networks of learners which are group oriented and self-supporting, and have access to human resources and teaching materials from the distance-teaching institution.

This diversity and problematic nature should not be viewed as a disadvantage of distance education but be recognised for what it is, and used to refine and reconstruct the methodologies and pedagogies of distance education. What may be required are conceptualisations of distance education which have a community orientation rather than a system orientation and which respond to issues and problems which are expressed by those who will be most affected by the decisions taken.

THE PERSISTENCE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD

The literature on distance education in the developing world suggests a number of reasons for its persistence. It has been claimed that distance education:

- provides initial and continuing education opportunities (Erdos 1975);
- offers educational opportunities to a large number of people who cannot be catered for within the conventional education system (Flinck & Flinck 1985);
- equalises educational opportunities (Unesco 1983);
- facilitates 'second chance' education (Shaw 1986);
- generates outputs relevant and appropriate to the different needs of major sectors of society, particularly in rural development and teacher training (Conboy & D'Cruz 1988);
- is flexible (Mathur 1985);
- is cost-effective in certain circumstances (Rumble 1988).

But the persistence of distance education in the developing world is linked primarily to the economics of distance education and the goals of national development.

THE ECONOMICS OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

It has been a long-held view that distance education is cheaper than conventional forms of education (Holmberg 1977). This is often referred to as a significant justification for distance education and has particular appeal to educators in the developing world (Kiyenze 1988). Occasionally, distance education is cheaper for developing nations, but usually the infrastructure establishment costs are prohibitively high. Sometimes reviewers appear selectively to overstate the case to the detriment of distance education. For instance, Ansere (1982) illustrates some of the extreme claims made on behalf of distance education when he argues that secondary education offered through a correspondence school in Ghana costs less than 2% per student of the costs of a boarding school. This is a very selective comparison and his analysis includes costs which are peculiar to boarding schools, such as dormitory construction costs, and the cost of science courses and facilities offered at the boarding school, but which are not offered by the correspondence school. More realistic claims are made on behalf of distance education by other writers. The early planning for the Universidad Nacional Abierta in Venezuala advocated that its establishment would directly reduce the overall costs of higher education to the government (COUNA 1977), and the committee which led to the establishment of Andra Pradesh Open University suggested that there were no cheaper alternatives for the expansion of tertiary education (Andra Pradesh 1982). On the other hand, evidence suggests that the Air Correspondence High School in South Korea is more expensive than day-school costs, and the Institute of Rural Distance Education in Brazil is more expensive than traditional education practices (Perraton 1982b). It is paradoxical that distance education, often justified on the grounds of its relative cheapness, compared with conventional education practices, is at times more expensive. This calls for well-constructed arguments by distance educators to maintain continued funding arrangements with government and other sponsoring agencies.

The crucial factor in the economics of distance education is the relative costs of distance education to total student numbers which may lower average costs below those associated with conventional education. In studies by Wagner (1972) and Laidlaw and Layard (1974) it was concluded that average costs per student at the Open University (UK) were significantly less than conventional universities. Wagner (1973) suggesting that it was approximately a quarter of those at conventional universities. Perraton (1982b) believes that the evidence about costs is mixed. He concluded on the basis of a comparative study that it is unusual for distance-education teaching to be less than half the cost of conventional teaching. The factor which seems to be important in this is the size of the student population which enables economies of scale to take effect.

More recently the debate about the economics of distance education has turned to cost efficiency rather than cost comparison. Rumble (1983a) discusses the cost efficiency of distance-learning systems. The most significant cost variables are those associated with the form of instruction, the number of courses on offer, and the number of enrolled students. He concludes that systems which cater for large numbers of students, such as teacher training, are cost efficient but this is achieved by reducing courses on offer, and in the case of low student populations, conventional teaching is more cost efficient than distance-education programs which depend on sophisticated levels of technology. Similarly, Guthrie (1985) draws attention to the fact that most developing-world countries will not achieve the so-called 'cost effectiveness' of distance education for teacher in-service programs because enrolments are 'too small'. Improved cost effectiveness may result from distance education but it necessitates large numbers (Guthrie 1987).

Few studies have been carried out to assess the size of student populations which justify the claims of cost efficiency in distance education. Wedemeyer (1981) refers to this as a 'critical minimum of aggregation'. Snowden and Daniel (1980) investigated the cost effectiveness of a small distance-education system, namely Athabasca University which has less than 15 000 students. They suggest a model, based on Wagner's earlier work, for cost analysis of small distance-education systems and note that the costs of course production at Athabasca were approximately one-third those of the Open University. This was unrelated to the size of the institution but rather more to its mode of operation. Athabasca University chooses to 'borrow' a significant number of courses from other distance-education systems. There is a tendency for developing countries to borrow courses to reduce overall costs. This practice may bring with it long-term disadvantages in terms of devaluing indigenous knowledge forms, and the adoption of strategies for learning and problem solving.

In Papua New Guinea, for instance, private distance-education institutions advertise 'borrowed' courses in accountancy and business management. The legal, financial and other content of these courses relates to the original country, rather than to Papua New Guinea. Similarly, psychology courses offer Western developmental theories of child growth and ignore indigenous beliefs and practices associated with child rearing and adolescence. Such distance courses are predicated on assumptions and learning theories which often conflict with traditional learning styles and ways of interpreting knowledge. In addition, the inclusion of model answers in these 'borrowed' courses, promotes views of knowledge and techniques for problem solving which also often conflict with legitimate forms of 'local' knowledge. The qualifications which are attained from such courses are relatively meaningless in the context in which they are both studied and practised. In the long term, these disadvantages may be more disruptive to the context in which distance education is situated than, in the short term, carrying the burden of higher costs associated with the development of locally produced materials.

Of course, the economics of distance education in the developing world may be affected by non-economic factors. The trend towards face-to-face teaching and increasing student support structures in distance education in developing countries may tend to discount any cost savings from the importation of existing courses. There is evidence which shows that at times decisions are made regardless of costs in order to achieve national strategies. This has been the case in Papua New Guinea where teachers are not generally offered full-time courses to upgrade their qualifications but are offered sponsored upgrading through distance education even though the costs of upgrading by distance have been much higher than anticipated (Wari 1989). The reason for this is that there are insufficient trained teachers available to take the place of those teachers who would otherwise have been engaged in full-time study (Neuendorf 1989).

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND DISTANCE EDUCATION

Education has always been integral to national development-strategies in the developing world (Carnoy 1980). The literature on distance education in developing countries (Jenkins 1989a; Rumble 1989b) emphasises the developmental character of distance education. It is seen as reducing the gap between rich and poor, within countries and between countries, and providing training for specific occupations. Distance education has been mostly based on the assumption that it is the modern sector of developing countries that will result in socially and politically acceptable forms of development. Expenditure on education is seen as an investment in human capital which will result in individual and national benefits through increased earning power and productivity. Such an approach may benefit a nation in terms of gross domestic product but it is also likely to assist privileged individuals and groups within society. Distance education for national development, as it is conceived in the majority of developing countries, tends to be elitist in conception. It is designed for specific groups who have already benefited from previous education expenditure and economic development policies, and who continue to receive benefits through initiatives in distance education. In this conception, developmental decisions tend to be made on behalf of others, usually by politicians and bureaucrats, in what they define as the best interests of the nation. This emphasis on national development results in an instrumentalist view of distance education amongst learners as they seek credentials and qualifications to qualify for the employment opportunities created by national development policies (Dore 1976).

At present the emphasis, in the majority of developing countries, is on formal distance-education programs because of the perceived relationship between formal education and national development. This relationship needs to be critiqued in the light of available evidence and there is value in reflecting upon questions such as:

- Is this the most desirable use of distance education for the developing world?
- Whose interests are best served by this?
- What should be the priorities of distance education?
- What is the role of non-formal distance-education programs in the developing world?

Certification or liberation?

Underdevelopment theorists such as Carnoy (1980) have been critical of the forms of development advocated for the developing world. They argue that investment from foreign countries in the developing world in minerals and cash crops contributes more to the developed world than the developing world. Todaro (1987) maintains that the expected economic development within the developing world has failed to materialise because the structures which support economic growth in the developed world do not exist in the same way in the developing world. Zahlin (1988) considers distance education from a similar viewpoint and notes that distance education in developed nations has been built upon a well-developed intellectual foundation which is not found in developing nations. Woodhouse (1987) maintains that the economic dependence of the developing world on developed nations continues though the tertiary education system in which '... the modern African university performs the same role as missionary schools once did: to win the hearts and minds of Africans in order to facilitate the process of economic colonialism and dependency' (p.130). The investment in education in the developing world serves to reinforce this economic dependence because it gives priority to secondary and higher education which produces the indigenous elite. LeVine and White (1986) refer to the way in which colonial education structures are used by emerging elite groups in the developing world to gain economic and political control of the means of production, and Bray *et al.* (1986) reflect on the continuing links between elite members of the developing world who are educated at overseas universities, socialised into Western academic traditions, and maintain links by engaging overseas consultants and attending international conferences. Distance education, in such circumstances, tends to be directed toward those developmental policies and those social and political groups which reinforce and maintain the existing social, political and economic relationships. A notion of distance education as a liberating mechanism is unlikely to receive much support given the ideology and the levels of control commanded by the indigenous elites.

Underdevelopment theorists argue for a more equitable distribution of educational opportunities and extensive provisions for the continuing education of adults. A literature survey by Arger (1985) on the promise and reality of distance education in developing countries concluded that 'distance education's promise of being able to provide a quality, cost-effective education for the masses of the Third World remains unfulfilled because the modernisation paradigm on which it is based consists of false assumptions' (p.13). What is required is an ideology of development and a model of education which is in harmony with developing nations rather than the industrialised world. Edwards (1989) calls for an approach to the development problems of the Third World which involve participation and control by those directly faced by the problems of the developing world. What is lacking in distance education in the developing world is dialogue. It is important that decisions are made by participants in development and decided at local levels because of the diversity of contexts and the problematic nature of distance education in the developing world. Crossley and Weeks (1986), in a review of relevance education in developing countries, concluded that successful implementation strategies are based on a unified social, political and education system, are sensitive to local contexts at all levels and take into account client aspirations.

Farnes (1988) discusses an alternative conception of distance education which owes something to Freire's (1973) concept of domestication, and the critical theorists' (Giroux 1981a, 1981b) emancipatory view of education. Farnes (1988) describes an innovatory community approach to distance education at the Open University (UK) and concludes that students in community-based courses gain knowledge and skills which extend social networks and improve self esteem, and they engage in new activities using knowledge and skills which contribute to the development of the country. Students in the program report strong feelings of emancipation and responsibility for their actions and successful participation in these courses occurs where child care, learning materials and facilities are provided without cost. Community education has a group orientation rather than an individual orientation which is a significant departure for distance education. It calls into question the role of standardised and centrally produced teaching materials and requires a different conception of curriculum development. Such an approach may be useful in the developing world. A more radical community approach to distance education could be based on the ideas of participatory research which have emanated from Nicaragua (McTaggart 1989). A radical conception of distance education would require a focus on programs in which participants have control over not only what is taught, but how and where distance education takes place. It is dependent on the participation of people, who through participatory planning and action, develop a deeper understanding of their lives and the structures which surround them in time and space. But the political climate is all important in the development of radical distance-education programs. Not all governments are enamoured with community approaches to education. Right-wing governments in Guatemala and El Salvadore have at one time or another actively worked against community action programs (Young *et al.* 1980).

Papua New Guinea, at present, is grappling with a reconceptualisation of education which 'must aim for integrating and maximising: socialisation, participation, liberation and equality' (Matane 1986, p.6). This has serious ramifications for the structure, organisation and design of mainstream education practices and it has implications also for an expanding distance-education role in the country. In Papua New Guinea, distance education has been designed to cater for perceived labourforce needs mostly at the secondary and tertiary levels, rather than basic literacy or continuing education programs. What will be required in

Papua New Guinea to carry out the Matane reforms is the reconstruction of not only the rationale and content of distance-education materials, but as well, the very form of these materials which at present only serve to limit notions of freedom, participation and liberation (Guy 1990a). Matane (1986) makes a plea for Papua New Guineans to take control and to assess the contextual variables operating in the country, and to search for appropriate solutions to educational issues, 'we do not need to rely on foreign education "experts" or consultants. Let us make more use of our own people who best understand our problems and needs' (p.1).

Development is a process of empowerment. This is a difficult goal to achieve because of vested interests of government intent on retaining control and promoting their view of development, and academics keen to retain power at the level of course design and certification. A community approach values indigenous knowledge (Hewson 1988) and solutions are reached through dialogue in which participants indicate what is relevant and what is not. If distance education is to contribute to development it needs to be on the basis of empowering people in the developing world to take responsibility for learning rather than on the basis of elitist views of power and wealth.

FROM COLONISATION TO COLLABORATION

Distance education in the developing world can be viewed as a consequence of colonisation. There is a considerable amount of literature which indicates that the developed world has provided the models of distance education for the developing world (APEID 1986; Gana 1984; Kabwasa & Kaunda 1973). The University of New England and the Open University (UK) are two distance-education models from the developed world which have had a significant influence on the developing world. The University of New England is a dual-mode institution in which a separate department administers extension studies, residential schools are mostly compulsory, and students are required to attend the final year of their studies on a full-time basis (Evans & Nation 1989a, pp.237–44). As a dual-mode institution, lecturers are obliged to teach internal and external students as well as produce external materials. This model operates well in the developed world where sufficient qualified staff are available and an adequate infrastructure for materials development is in place. Instructional designers are available to assist academic staff to prepare external materials following procedures which have been referred to as an 'industrial' approach to distance education (Peters 1989). The University of Papua New Guinea has established an Extension Studies Department and used elements of the New England model (Kaeley 1985). The University employs a number of overseas contract officers as coordinators, rather than as instructional designers, to work with academic departments to assist with writing and motivating departments to produce materials, but the levels of cooperation vary significantly with many academic staff claiming they have insufficient time and expertise to 'externalise' materials (Crossley 1989). The University is, at present, 'externalising' the In-service Bachelor of Education degree program in which the last year of study will be taken on a full-time basis on campus. It remains to be seen how attractive this will be to the Teaching Service Commission and its preparedness to release teachers given the present shortage of trained teachers in Papua New Guinea. The University of Zambia has also adopted the New England model, but there are barely enough national academic staff to cope with full-time on-campus teaching let alone the development of external teaching materials as well (Nyirenda 1989).

The Open University has had a more extensive influence on the developing world and there has been a proliferation of 'open' style universities. The Open University was originally based on an educational technology rationale (Harris 1987a) with written materials envisaged as playing a supporting role. However, in practice, print has proved to be the core medium together with significant levels of teaching through regional tutors and counsellors, study centres and summer schools. Initially, significant proportions of teaching were done through broadcast television and radio, but, this has declined in recent years with audio and video cassettes becoming more popular. In addition, computer-based distance education is establishing a foothold in the Open University's teaching. These means are commonplace in distance education in developed nations, for example, with the exception of broadcast media, Deakin University uses similar face-to-face and technological means in its distance education. However, such is not the case in developing nations. The problem is that, to adopt the sophistication of the Open University, there would need to be the levels of specialisation found within the Open University for course design and development and there would need to be crucial technological and communications infrastructure needed to sustain the approach (Jenkins 1989b; Ming 1988).

Some writers have interpreted the dependency of the developing world on innovations from the developed world in political terms as deliberate neo-imperialist policy by former colonial powers (LeVine & White 1986; Nunan 1988; Woodhouse 1987). The developing world needs to monitor and critique innovations carefully before they are introduced but there has not been a great tradition of such in the past. Flinck and Flinck (1985) maintain that the educational assumptions of developed countries are inappropriate to the needs of the developing world. Crooks (1983) reminds distance educators in the developing world of educational mistakes based on the procedures of Europe or America, and that it is unrealistic to assume that the apparent success of distance-education strategies in the developed world will necessarily carry over to the developing world. The trend towards multinational distance-teaching institutions (Lundin 1988) may represent a new wave of colonisation and the *Commonwealth of Learning*, for instance, is in a position to influence relationships as it intends to 'facilitate staff training, to provide consultancy expertise to countries planning to make greater use of distance education, and to encourage exchanges of personnel between institutions within each region ... and the cooperative development of materials for use in several countries' (Daniel 1989, p.161).

There is some evidence to suggest that there is a move away from the colonisation of distance education to a more collaborative spirit. Some distance educators are articulating the need for models of distance education which are sensitive to the social and cultural contexts of distance education in the developing world (Jevons *et al.* 1986). The Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA) has established a set of rules for collaboration with the developing world in distance-education initiatives which places the ultimate responsibility for activities on the local authority, that consultants show openness and flexibility in relation to the social, economic and political contexts of the country, that it is impossible to import existing distance-education models from the developed world and expect them to work in the same way, and that consultants have an important training role to carry out (Flinck & Flinck 1985). The literature that has been reviewed so far about distance education in the developing world highlights the lack of infrastructure and the lack of trained local staff. The developed world may take up a stronger training role in the future in developing countries but it needs to acknowledge shifts in responsibilities and levels of control in order to be successful.

In a separate development, regional organisations in the developing world are emerging which may result in increased opportunities to develop sensitive responses to distance education. The economics of distance education partly explain this development in that there are economies of scale associated with increased student numbers, the costs of technology can be shared and the available resources from the developed world can be focused into regional projects which are agreed to at that level (Crocombe 1988), but there are equally strong pedagogical reasons for it as well in terms of course development and the sharing of locally developed expertise (Monsell-Davis & Naidu 1989). The Capricorn Interuniversity Program (PIUTEC) is an organisation of five South American countries which are cooperating in distance-education programs. The establishment of the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADDC) is an interesting example of a regional response to issues including distance education. Sibanda and Northcott (1989) report 'SADCC countries have encouraged the development of local distance-education agencies and are progressively placing less reliance on overseas-based colleges' (p.220) and 'national, socio-economic and ideological aspirations are reflected in the curricula and this needs to be respected in any collaborative distance-education provision envisaged' (p.221).

The developing world needs to critique and assess the growth of regional organisations. Regionalisation may not achieve anything more than the increased bureaucratisation of distance education and the membership of regional organisations needs reflection and critique with a view to addressing the concerns of all members not just those of the dominant national interests. The Australian and South Pacific External Studies Association (ASPESA) is a regional organisation of both developed and developing countries in the South Pacific. The small island states of the Pacific tend to get 'swamped' by Australia and New Zealand, and Mitchell (1982) notes, 'there are problems in having such a diverse membership although goodwill helps minimise them' (p.215).

Distance education in developing countries also needs to develop strong collaborative links with conventional, domestic education systems in order to share scarce physical and human resources, to define and elaborate roles, to reduce duplication and to agree on the areas of education that each can best address. Distance education has much to offer conventional education practices and Smith (1985) notes that the developments in distance methodologies and teaching materials are being carried over into conventional teaching and materials development.

DISTANCE EDUCATION IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD – UNDERDEVELOPED AND UNDERUSED

Distance education remains underdeveloped and underused in the developing world despite the presence of overseas consultants, the introduction of innovations which have been successful overseas, and theories of distance education which promise the resolution of some of the major problems facing the developing world.

A review of the research literature on distance education indicates successful and unsuccessful programs in the developing world. For instance, it is well documented that distance education has made a significant contribution to the expansion of formal education at the secondary level and to a lesser extent at the tertiary level, especially in the area of teacher education. But the provision of non-formal education opportunities throughout the developing world have been less pronounced and the liberating potential of distance education through radical conceptions of adult and continuing education remains underused. In addition it is possible to identify programs that have been successful but are now in decline or have been withdrawn completely. For example, the in-service primary-teacher training program in Swaziland, the Radio Language Arts project in Kenya, the use of satellite instruction at the University of the South Pacific, the modular teacher in-service program in Ghana and the National Correspondence College in Zambia have promised a great deal and at times they have provided tangible progress in solving complex and unique educational problems.

What accounts for the failures in distance education in the developing world and why should seemingly successful programs go into decline? There are many reasons, such as political interference, tensions between the methodology and pedagogy of distance education with the social and cultural contexts of the developing world, and it is convenient at times to blame the underfunding of distance education by governments who tend to treat distance education as a low-cost form of education. Guthrie (1986) suggests that funding arrangements for many innovations in the developing world are at adequate levels at trial stages, but funding is severely reduced when it comes to the implementation of programs on an extensive basis. But there are two other factors which the research literature consistently highlights to explain why distance education is underdeveloped. The first is the lack of an adequate infrastructure, such as regional study facilities, materials production systems and technological capacity, to initiate and maintain distance-education programs, and the second factor is the lack of trained indigenous staff. These two factors account for the present general level of underdevelopment of distance education in the developing world. The developing world has a shortage of indigenous staff to meet the demands of conventional education institutions and there is a strong scepticism amongst academics in the developing world about the legitimacy of distance education as a form of education which can achieve comparable results with on-campus full-time programs. Guthrie (1986) has identified that it is overseas contract officers who often initiate innovations in the developing world but are withdrawn 'too early' without suitable replacement staff to take their places. It may be that academics from conventional education institutions will need to undergo staff development so that they are able to assume responsibility for the implementation and future development of distance-education projects.

Without reasonable funding and physical and human resources to support distance students, distance education is faced with either a serious decline in its presence in the developing world or having to rely on the fundamental elements which distinguish distance education from conventional education practices to carry it through this period of underdevelopment. In circumstances such as these, many distance-education institutions in the developing world have had no other option than to adopt a technocratic approach to distance education (Guy 1990a), even where there may be human resolve to improve the conception and delivery of distance education. This approach relies on students 'consuming' comprehensive learning packages, without any opportunities for interactive learning experiences of the kinds described by Evans and Nation (1989c). Many of these packages are poor in conception and in quality (Jenkins 1989a). Books of readings, study guides and assignment books proliferate and define the curriculum for learners. Evans and Nation (1989b) are critical of distance-education programs which are based on 'instructional industrialisation' and result in a 'dehumanised' view of education. Unfortunately, many countries in the developing world are unable to boast about the quality of their instructional design, let alone entertain notions of dialogic teaching materials or interactive satellite and computer links. The reality for many distance-education institutions in the developing world is one of routinisation. Isolated learners have little, if any, interaction with teachers other than the impersonal comments at the bottom of an assignment. Some students cope but combined with contextual variables which can easily influence the practice of distance education, 'drop-outs' become more numerous, and the realisation of distance education is underdeveloped. Such is the reality for many distance students in the developing world.

This does not mean to say that written distance materials cannot sustain effective distance programs, but to do so requires materials that have a quality and relevance that has only been achieved in a few places in the developing world. In order to achieve quality and relevance, a substantial investment in the infrastructure required for materials production is needed, as well as the expertise to initiate and maintain distance-education projects. This capability is enjoyed by a small number of distance institutions in the developing world and it will take time to develop in the majority of institutions. It can only be hoped that the persistence that distance education has displayed over the past twenty years will continue into the next decades.

PART FIVE

TECHNOLOGY IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

TERRY EVANS

MATTERS OF TECHNOLOGY ARE never far from the considerations of distance educators. In fact, they often loom large over the entire teaching and learning processes of distance education. Writers such as Bolton (1986) have shown that the history of distance education and its antecedents is linked to the development of modern societies. As increases in knowledge and education fuelled the industrial revolution, which in turn led to industrialised forms of goods and services, which in themselves created demands for further and more sophisticated industrial developments, then so was the ground work for distance education laid.

In itself, the rise of industrialism brought with it demands for mass education, especially in terms of literacy and numeracy, but also in terms of producing the values and aspirations associated with the emerging capitalist economies. These educational demands were difficult to produce and locate entirely within childhood and, therefore, the needs for forms of education and training for adults were soon displayed. Adults who were labouring in various forms of production (paid or unpaid, at home or at work) were always going to find that there were competing demands for them to be in other places at the same time. For example, attending night school or a class at the local school of mines competed with their needs to be at home or work. Some of these adults, such as the pioneers to whom Bolton (1986) refers, were on the frontiers of modern civilisation and, therefore, were far removed from the educational sources of the more developed industrial heartlands.

The technologies which were developed as part of the processes of industrialisation provided early distance education with its educational means. The capacity to produce paper cheaply, and to print, bind and distribute it, are products of the industrialised goods and services which have shaped modernity. These products were and remain the key features of distance education, although the capacities to produce and distribute other forms of text, including non-print texts, have expanded both quantitatively and qualitatively. This really has been and remains the technological base of distance education. An 'acid' test of this can be seen in developing nations where, when they have little capacity to produce paper cheaply, or to print and distribute it via a reliable postal service, the difficulties of commencing distance education seem insurmountable.

In developed nations we take for granted the level and nature of infrastructural technology because it has existed, perhaps in less sophisticated forms, for decades or even a century or more. Our assumptions about being able to use paper, printed text and postal services are so well-founded and taken-for-granted that we do not even consider them; unless some disputation or disaster *temporarily* suspends our access to such resources. Even some of the telecommunications technologies we rely upon, and to which we readily assume we have access, are decades old in developed nations. For example, the telephone has become more commonplace (we assume universality in distance education in Australia, but this is not quite the case) and nowadays, has the capacity to link people's voices much more cheaply and efficiently; in this sense, the telephone itself is not a new technology. Rather, as with printing, the new technology lies behind these broad communications technologies, where the silicon chip and the optical fibre have improved speed, capacity, quality etc., so that nowadays we can do more things with the telephone and with print.

Some people who talk about distance education see it as essentially a matter of (only?) using technology. The educational processes of distance education (i.e. those connected with the practice of teaching and learning at a distance) are often omitted from their thoughts. It is as if distance education was just about selecting a body of knowledge and communicating it via one or more technologies. This is analogous to the classroom teacher selecting their body of knowledge and speaking it to the class; nothing more and nothing less. As some of our colleagues in this and other units have argued, education is fundamentally about dialogue and reflection. So the classroom teacher needs to listen as well as speak, to observe as well as present, and then to think, reflect and act in terms of what is heard and observed. The communication between teacher and student (both ways) is fundamental. The technologies of distance education are used to help us frame and establish a useful educational dialogue. In this sense, it is the organisation of the curriculum and pedagogy which is the important educational issue and the matter of technology forms part of the context in which distance teaching and learning takes place (see, for example, Bates 1988b).

It is worth emphasising that matters of technology involve all but the most simple forms of face-to-face teaching, so that the classroom teacher, for example, draws upon printed materials, audio and video equipment, computers etc., both directly and indirectly during the course of their work. Arguably, technology can be seen as the tools which people use to aid their actions in life so, in this sense, even the humble blackboard and chalk is a form of educational (visual) technology for the work of a classroom teacher. Try to imagine teaching a primary-school class without even this technology; there is no disputing it is an important teaching aid.

What this part seeks to do is to put technology under critical scrutiny; within society, education and distance education. That is, not just in terms of distance education itself, but also in terms of the broader social contexts in which distance education and technology are located. The intention is to provide some critical perspectives on technology and distance education which will broaden and increase the debate about such matters in the distance-education community. We have invited two people, Mick Campion and Dave Harris, who have been thinking and writing about such matters for several years to provide some ideas for the book. We asked each of them to write a critical essay on the topic of technology and distance education. The topic was very broad, but as both contributors had well-developed ideas in the area we knew that they would each bring a different critical approach to their essays.

Mick Campion is a senior lecturer in distance education at Murdoch University, where he has worked since 1981. He teaches in the sociology and philosophy of science, and the sociology of work and industry at Murdoch in addition to his work in distance education. Previously he worked at the Open University in the United Kingdom for several years and held a Leverhulme research fellowship in Aberdeen working on a project developing course materials for people working in the social services. In the late 1970s he completed his PhD, which was concerned with ethnomethodology and the relationships between philosophy and sociology. More recently his work has concerned the sociological analysis of the changing nature of work in society. This analysis has led him to fix his critical gaze on the ways distance education is being restructured in Australia and to argue that the policy-makers are basing their decisions on outdated views of work and industrial practices.

David Harris is Head of Applied Social Science at the College of St Mark and St John at Plymouth, UK. He completed his PhD at the University of London based on a study of the Open University from which he published a book *Openness and Closure in Distance Education* (1987a). He was a research assistant in the Institute of Educational Technology at the Open University and continues to work for the OU as a tutor on the MA coursework program. In addition to distance education, he has research interests in media studies and social theory. David is currently writing a book about the influence of Antonio Gramsci on work in education, cultural studies and state social policy.

Mick Campion's 'Critical essay on educational technology in distance education' takes the reader through a series of arguments about what he sees as the *technophiliac* and *technophobic* nature of people's responses to the changes to technology in society. We shall leave him to define these terms but – rather like Dave Harris who sees that there are good and bad sides to the approaches to, and uses of, technology – Mick Campion sees that there are several competing and conflicting dualities within the area of technology and distance education. His chapter is a revised version of a paper entitled 'Technophilia and Technophobia' which he presented at the International Educational Technology conference held in Perth in 1986. A shortened version of the original paper was also published in the *Australian Journal of Educational Technology* in Autumn 1989.

The intellectual journey which Mick Campion presents to the reader is one which draws in literature from the sociology of work and industry. This is especially useful because such ideas and theories have generally remained outside of the debates within distance education and yet their pertinence to both the organisation and practice of distance education and to the ways in which distance education is used for the purpose of, for example, professional development and staff training, are quite significant.

Towards the end of his 'Critical essay on educational technology in distance education' Mick Campion includes a brief discussion of the ways in which the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission's *Review of Efficiency and Effectiveness* (1986) addressed technological and distance education issues. He then concludes with some comments about the debates about post-Fordism and their relationship to higher education and distance education.

Dave Harris, in his chapter entitled, 'Towards a critical educational technology in distance education' draws on quite different, although in some ways related, intellectual traditions from Mick Campion. In many ways, Dave Harris's essay reflects a typical critical theory analysis drawing, as it does, on Habermas, Adorno and Horkheimer from the 'Frankfurt School'. He also uses his work on and at the Open University to illuminate and illustrate his arguments towards the development of a critical educational technology. He also draws on his current work teaching (on-campus) media studies to explain some practical ideas for a way forward. This work is particularly interesting because it represents an example of the 'reflective practitioner' in action, in fact, one might say he exemplifies the *critically* reflective practitioner in the terms outlined in chapter 2. Dave Harris's outlining of the crisis of rationality in higher education, especially from his British viewpoint, makes an interesting complementary piece with that of Mick Campion's critical review of the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission's *Review of Efficiency and Effectiveness* (1986).

CHAPTER 9

CRITICAL ESSAY ON EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

MICHAEL G. CAMPION

IN 1989, OTTO PETERS defended his previous 'industrial' analysis of distance education and sought to relate it to contemporary developments in the administration and practice of distance education. Peters argued that his original work, published in 1973, was concerned in part with the prospect that:

> ... dominant political groups might easily seize power by increasing their influence not only in the administration, industry, military and the transport and communications systems, but also through a centralised, industrialised system of education. (Peters 1989, p.4)

Peters's grave concerns are to be found outside of distance education. For example, Hill writes:

> It has now become clear that technology is one of the means by which managers control the activities that occur within their firms, which by implication, suggests that when managers choose a particular technology they also choose how their firms are to be controlled. (Hill 1981, p.105)

If we substitute education systems, or even distance-education institutions, for firms, and substitute both staff and students for those carrying out the firms' various activities, then we can see the significance of technology within distance education as a critical issue. Furthermore, the National Distance Education Conference (NDEC) through its terms of reference (see NDEC Agenda Paper 1 1989) has been charged with a special responsibility in relation to educational technology. Hence, we begin to see that distance educators need to understand that the decisions they take will contribute to a range of very potent political outcomes, varying from the totalitarian to the democratic.

Through this essay I hope to encourage you to give due regard to these broader social and political issues when you come to make, or consider, choices about technologies in distance education. As we shall see, the choices are not clear-cut, but an understanding of the sociology and politics of technology, amongst other things, can help the practitioner, manager and policy-maker make their decisions within a critically orientated framework.

Bernard Levin wrote in the late 1960s that he had begun to suspect that '... a long period of purgatory has got to be gone through before we reach the computerised Kingdom of Heaven', and that 'we are presently stuck well into it' (Martin & Norman 1973, p.407). The first point we should notice here is the sense of optimism – we are expected to reach the computerised Kingdom of Heaven. Others, of course, hold far more pessimistic views of the future. Lowi, for example, refers to the fact that educational institutions are '... uniquely capable of programming the individual for a full life of comfort within the Hell of Administrative Boredom' (Lowi 1982, p.469). The analogies are both religious and either utopian or dystopian and it is not uncommon for debates about technology to be couched either explicitly or implicitly in conceptual frameworks of this kind. So, for example, Walter Mathews's work about the impact of computers upon society is entitled *Monster or Messiah* (Mathews 1980). Alan Roberts's article in *Arena* is entitled 'Technology as Hope and Threat' (Roberts 1979) and M. Cooley's book is called *Architect or Bee* (Cooley 1980).

In this essay I seek to display these two diametrically opposed responses to technological change, which I contend have a powerful influence upon contemporary thought, for all too often, as Winner points out, 'Conversations gravitate towards warring polarities and choosing sides' (1977, p.11). These opposed responses are to be found within distance education and can be seen to contribute to the understanding of technology in distance education as a critical issue.

Before outlining how I shall proceed, I would like to digress very briefly to mention a short paper entitled 'CONFESS: A Humanistic, Diagnostic–Prescriptive Computer Program to Decrease Person to Person Interaction Time During Confession'. The paper, drawn from a 'journal' entitled *The Journal of Irreproducible Results*, commences as follows:

> Recent Vatican interest in the effect upon laymen of the shortage of professional priests (PP) and the decreased seminary enrollment of potential priests (P'P) has led to the development of Computerised Operations (Non-retrievable) for Expediting Sinner Services (CONFESS). This program provides a viable alternative to traditional confession procedures by listing penance

> requirements (by sin) on a private print-out to confessees appropriate to the sin committed. This eliminates one problem which frequently occurs when the confessee, because he is under extreme duress, may forget the original penance. In addition, the program provides a probability estimate of the consequence of not completing the penance associated with a given sin; for example, the number of years in purgatory. Thus, full freedom of choice is given to the participant/user (PU). The program requires no PP involvement and hence frees PPs to engage in more pressing activities. It is hoped that by providing PPs with more time for critical theological activities, PPs will consider the priesthood a more socially conscious and relevant profession, causing an increase of P'P enrollment in accredited seminaries.

The article and journal are doubtless spoofs; it really does not matter, for the article's very plausibility suggests the sense of puzzlement and disorientation that Winner speaks of (1977, p.10). One does not require too much imagination to substitute lecturers for priests, students for confessees, research for critical theological studies, and so on. Could one write a similar paper related to distance education and have it published in the *The Journal of Irreproducible Results?* However, we shall now return to the matter at hand: technology and distance education.

In the first section of this article I want to pursue the issue of gravitation towards warring polarities mentioned by Winner through a brief discussion of the notions of *technophilia* and *technophobia*.

In the second I shall relate these opposing perspectives to certain aspects of social class theory in order that we can better grasp their social rather than their apparently personal significance.

In the third section I shall present an argument which is designed to show how the opposed perspectives of *technophilia* and *technophobia* are only rational if certain assumptions are accepted without question. Assumptions which are grounded in mythical notions of technology and technological change.

In the fourth section I shall introduce a number of different versions of what has been referred to as technological society and then consider the possible implications of each of these for education.

In the fifth section I shall turn to the education sector and the CTEC's 'Efficiency and Effectiveness Review' and offer some preliminary remarks on the review's treatment of technology in both education and distance education.

And in the sixth and final section I want to reorient debate around contemporary discussions of possible transformations in industry in order to offer the beginnings of a possible route out of the debate as currently formulated.

TECHNOPHILIA AND TECHNOPHOBIA

As concepts, *technophilia* and *technophobia*, are closely related to the notions of cyberphilia and cyberphobia presented in the work edited by Van Tassel and Van Tassel entitled *The Compleat Computer* (1983, p.96). It seems to me that reference to technology rather than cybernetics is both more readily accessible and of a more general application, and that on these grounds it might be preferred. Badham (1984, p.62) refers to the pair of concepts *technocratic* and *technophobic*, however, whilst the former term is common in contemporary usage it misleadingly suggests that reason supports those who favour technology, whereas emotion or perhaps a lack of reason, motivates those who fear, or are opposed to technology. Again it seems to me that the terms *technophilia* and *technophobia* reveal, in a more evenly balanced fashion, the possibly irrational basis of both commitments.

Langdon Winner provides us with a succinct general statement on this particular issue:

> ... the confusion surrounding the concept 'technology' is an indication of a kind of lag in public language, that is, a failure of both ordinary speech and social scientific discourse to keep pace with the reality that needs to be discussed. 'Technology', therefore, is applied haphazardly to a staggering collection of phenomena, many of which are recent additions to our world. One feels that there must be a better way of expressing oneself about these developments, but at present our concepts fail us.
>
> One consequence of this state of affairs is that discussions of the political implications of advanced technology have a tendency to slide into a polarity of good versus evil. Because there is no middle ground for talking about such things, statements often end up being expressions of total affirmation or total denial. One either hates technology or loves it. (Winner 1977, p.10)

Bertrand de Jouvenel (cited in Shepard) makes reference to the same dichotomy or set of polarities when he states that:

> The idea that man is being and will increasingly be driven along a determined path by the gathering forces of technology seems to me a nefarious idea, generating in the minority an impotent and paradoxical *technophobia*, and in the majority the same kind of blind ecstatic confidence in what shall come to pass that was characteristic of laissez-faire in the narrower field of economics. (Shepard 1980, p.153)

We might wish to question de Jouvenel's view of which group is in the minority and which is in the majority whilst still taking his general point.

In distance education, the majority seems to be more *technophobic*, certainly to the extent that they are not exuding 'ecstatic confidence' about the 'forces of technology'.

Reference to a similar polarity of thought is given by Sir Charles Snow in his lecture 'The two cultures and the scientific revolution' (Kumar 1978, p.189). Snow described the differing orientations of the traditional humanists and the scientists, and in so doing threw light upon differences within the academic community which are perhaps worth reminding ourselves of in this context.

Within the confines of this section of the article I shall not provide a mass of evidence of the existence of these two orientations towards technology within society at large or within distance education in particular. Perhaps this will not be a disadvantage, for each of us in our own institution is doubtless surrounded by colleagues who could be collected within one or the other camp. The lecturer who continues to avoid using even such items as audio cassettes and the educational technologist who pushes uncritically any new device which appears, are archetypes with antecedents in all institutions. The Van Tassels (1983) refer to computer programmers who become '... so wrapped up in (computing) they have no life outside the computer' (p.196). Weizenbaum (in Van Tassel & Van Tassel, 1983), when speaking of the computer hacker points out that:

> The hacker seeks the same type of control that cyberphobes shy away from, playing a role as 'the creator of universes for which he alone is the lawgiver... programmed scripts compliantly obey their laws and vividly exhibit their obedient behaviour. No playwright, no stage director, no emperor, however powerful, has ever experienced such absolute authority to arrange a stage or a field of battle and to command such unswerving dutiful actors or troops. (Van Tassel & Van Tassel 1983, p.96)

Here we get a feeling for what Shepard (1980, p.148) refers to as the 'janus-faced' image of technology. One grasps for that from which the other shies away. The hacker clearly epitomises the *technophiliac* orientation. An orientation which resonates, not only with the quotation from Peters at the beginning of this essay, but also powerfully with the following comments of Hitler's Minister of Armaments and Munitions:

> Basically, I exploited the phenomenon of the technician's often blind devotion to his task. Because of what seems to be the moral neutrality of technology, these people were without scruples about their activities. The more technical the world imposed on us by the war the more dangerous was this indifference of the technician to the direct consequence of his anonymous activities ... (Jones 1983, p.217)

This orientation also leads to what Elton (1977, p.239) describes as a 'Concorde mentality', named after the relentless and expensive pursuit by Britain and France of the technological dream of supersonic passenger aircraft. It is the 'Concorde mentality' which, in his view, leads developing nations to invest in expensive satellite communications when they have an abundance of people, but far from an abundance of capital.

You might want to consider whether the technological developments being pursued by the Department of Employment, Education and Training in conjunction with the National Distance Education Conference can usefully be conceptualised in this manner?

At the other extreme, that is the *technophobic* orientation it is useful to consider why some react fearfully and with hostility to new technology. As Zubaff (see Van Tassel & Van Tassel 1983, p.95) points out, on the introduction of computers into the workplace, workers sense a loss of control over their work environment, together with a further increased sense of powerlessness when they realise that the machines can do many of the tasks which previously constituted the basis of their skills.

Once again you might wish to consider how and why such feelings could affect distance teachers who found their courses were replaced by computer-assessed learning modules developed and administered from overseas; or the students attempting to increase their confidence, critical abilities and feelings of self-worth whilst confronted with such learning modules.

Sheridan (in Van Tassel & Van Tassel 1983, pp.197–8) refers to seven features of what he calls alienation and each merits consideration in this context:

1 He sees people as comparing themselves with computers and worrying about their inferiority and obsolescence. I think there is a major issue here for higher education, for, if such an attitude, however subtly, dominates in sections of the community where commitment to participation is only marginal then it could reinforce differential participation rates and generate an increasingly inegalitarian trend. In relation to distance education in particular the ever-increasing ability of providers to turn out an apparently professional product may well disable rather than enable students.

2 He points to the way in which computer control makes human operators more rather than less remote from their tasks. I suspect this probably depends upon the nature of the task, and the social and economic relationships within which it must be performed. However, doubtless you will be able to recall examples that comply with his view.

3 Next he refers to the area of de-skilling where a whole range of occupants of different occupations have effectively become button pushers, for example pilots, typesetters, laboratory technicians. Once

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again the enormous implications of such processes for higher education as a whole should be evident. In relation to distance education our understanding of areas such as course production, student records clearly could benefit from such an analysis.

4 Here he refers to the increase in the power gap between the technologically literate minority as compared with the technologically illiterate majority given the access to information available to the former and denied to the latter. You might want to consider whether the increasing user friendliness of computers weakens his analysis here?

5 In a similar vein he refers to the process of mystification whereby in effect the technophiles can effectively push technophobes out of any debate by shifting discussion to the level of technical detail. Again, I suspect you will recognise yourself on one or other side of this divide.

6 He reminds us of how as computer controlled systems become larger, more complex, more centralised and more tightly controlled, failures can be very costly whilst the chances of them occurring may be slight. If you have fifty students on a course it does not cost an institution much to correct an error, if you have five thousand, the costs are of a different overall magnitude. We can see that the 'rationalisation' of distance (higher) education into eight Distance Education Centres (DECs) in 1989 increased the potential magnitude of such costs.

7 Finally, he draws attention to the threatening possibility that intelligent machines may become more powerful than humans. Whilst in some ways this may seem fanciful there must be many who have joined the ranks of the unemployed who might entertain such a fear. Indeed the desire of many adults to upgrade their skills through distance education is perhaps one form of response to such a fear.

Now, whilst the above remarks in relation to the process referred to by Sheridan as alienation are instructive we would do well to remember that a more radical conception of the alienated worker would be the worker who was happy with such a set of conditions. Hence, distance-education students who uncritically imbibe the products of the institutions through which they study may be more rather than less alienated than those who display criticism and dissatisfaction.

As yet it would appear that *technophilia* and *technophobia* are generalised expressions of purely personal orientations towards technology, but what if we were to discover that this was not the case, and that these opposed perspectives were simply one more instance of the articulation of an awareness that differentiation between the haves and have-nots is increasing, rather than declining.

Consider the following general statement from Eric Entemann *et al.* (in Boyle, Elliott & Roy):

> Those who have an interest in controlling workers in order to increase efficiency would have us believe that the technology of production lines, secretarial pools, pollution, hierarchical control is good, that it is necessary, and that it is inevitable. While 'progress' is sold to us as improving the quality of life – in the form of products that relieve us from monotonous labour, move us faster through the air, cook our food in seconds – it has, in fact, alienated us and degraded our lives. Technology for most of us is mysterious and awe-inspiring. Taught to believe in and trust a small group of specialists who supposedly hold the golden key of knowledge, we increasingly relinquish control over our own lives, and are left atomised, frustrated, suffering a vague sense of loss and resentment. (Boyle, Elliott & Roy 1977, p.319)

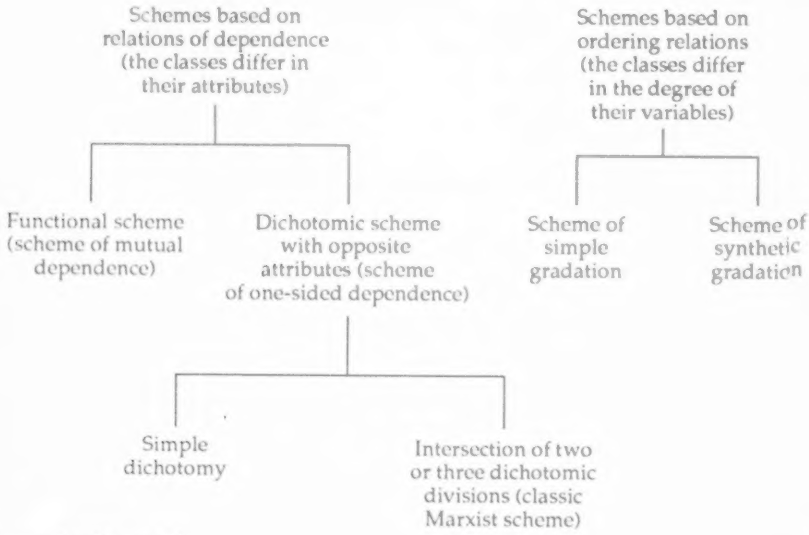
Perhaps a specific example of the introduction of a new technology is relevant here. An example from outside distance education seems pertinent. I shall, for reasons which will become clear, return to it again later in this essay. The example is that of the introduction of snowmobiles in Lappland and Alaska. In their careful analysis of this process Pelto and Muller-Wille (1972, pp.165–200) conclude that in certain areas those people who cannot buy snowmobiles appear to be at a serious disadvantage. They argue that the introduction of these machines to those areas is likely to increase the differentiation between the haves and the have-nots. But more of snowmobiles later.

TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL CLASS

Now I want to provide access to certain rudimentary ideas concerning theories of social class for they will provide you with conceptual structures within which you may decide that the notions of *technophilia* and *technophobia* can be grounded in firmer foundations of social theory. Such an approach will also assist when later we come to consider various versions of technological society.

Consider the diagrammatic representation of interpretations of class structure presented in Ossowski's work:

Types of interpretation of class structure


Schemes based on relations of dependence (the classes differ in their attributes)
Schemes based on ordering relations (the classes differ in the degree of their variables)
Functional scheme (scheme of mutual dependence)
Dichotomic scheme with opposite attributes (scheme of one-sided dependence)
Scheme of simple gradation
Scheme of synthetic gradation
Simple dichotomy
Intersection of two or three dichotomic divisions (classic Marxist scheme)

(Ossowski 1961, p.152)

Ossowski states that:

> The relations of which we can make use when we speak of a class-system are ... of a twofold nature: ordering relations and relations of dependence ... Two basic interpretations of social class correspond to these two kinds of relations. We have to do with the first interpretation when the class division is conceived of as a division into groups differentiated according to the degree in which they possess the characteristic which constitutes the criterion of division, as, for instance, income-level. Since these groups are arranged in a system of superior and inferior classes according to the degree in which they display the particular characteristic, class structure carries or has the same meaning here as class stratification. In the second interpretation social classes form a system according to their one-sided or mutual dependence, dependence being understood in both cases as a dependence based on causal relationships. (Ossowski 1961, pp.145–6)

My contention is that the opposed responses to technology, in society generally and within distance education in particular, can be located within this framework as interpretations of the type that indicate relations of dependence of the dichotomous kind which could be viewed either as a simple dichotomy in its own right, or as one additional dichotomous division which intersects with others.

Lest any of you remain sceptical about the usefulness of this conceptual strategy, Hallblade and Mathews (in Mathews 1980, p.33) indicate how the generation of centralised data and information through computers places enormous power in the hands of those at the centre. The increasingly efficient collection and collation of data on higher education by the Department of Employment, Education and Training is but one example of such a process; a process which is controlling and shaping the nature and development of distance education in Australia.

The point is, as Dickson (1974, p.30) says, only large institutions have the resources necessary to employ such systems and consequently large and powerful institutions experience a growth in power whilst the small effectively become powerless. Add to this the fact that, as Martin and Norman (1973, p.407) point out only the gifted will have access to such tools and we begin to sense why the majority may have reason for their misgivings. Macpherson (in Dale, Esland, Fergusson & MacDonald 1981, p.73) points to this growing dissatisfaction and suggests that as those working in the public sector services, such as education which had been seen as labour intense find technology reducing their job security so also will they be less likely to acquiesce to such processes.

Clearly the 'Review of efficiency and effectiveness in higher education', the establishment of the DECs and the various policy documents which have followed since, together with the responses to them, can be examined in the light of these ideas. However, the very function of education has also been defined by some in relation to this dichotomy. Consider the following proposal:

> The accelerating industrialisation of society not only creates directly technical and scientific occupations in ever greater numbers, importance and variety, but also causes traditional activities of all kinds to become permeated with science and technology... Thus education is increasingly called upon to produce not only technicians but a population sympathetic to technological advance. (Dale, Esland, Fergusson and MacDonald 1981, p.191)

The education sector may be called upon in this way precisely because of the threats to political stability as outlined by Williams:

> The political stability of technological societies may be threatened from many directions. First, by the hopelessness and alienation of the technologically excluded sub-poor. Second, by the intellectuals who reject the 'smothering compulsion' of technological society. Third, by the chaos of competitive and incessant economic group demands. Fourth, by failure, for whatever reason, to maintain the option of economic growth. Fifth, by inability to ensure that the

> myth of purposefulness is reborn in every generation, or replaced by an acceptable alternative. (Williams 1971, p.60)

By grounding the notions of *technophilia* and *technophobia* within this broader debate we can better understand why, given current levels of unemployment (especially when standard statistics are supplemented with estimates for hidden unemployment and underemployment), technology as a blessing is transformed into a blight, and how the *technophiliac* is somewhat less than welcomed by the majority. Indeed, as Kuttner (1984, p.34) argues, technology would be a less ambiguous blessing against a background of full employment. In a similar vein Hill (1981, p.30) indicates that if the economic system were based on trust and cooperation, technology could have a liberating rather than a degrading effect. I shall return to issues of this kind at the end of this essay but, the absence of such conditions, and the presence of a *technophobic* orientation could well account for the resistance of educational institutions to developments in educational technology which Hummel writing in the 1970s found surprising (1977, p.186).

'The efficiency and effectiveness review' (CTEC 1986, p.153) argues that although institutions have been constrained by three factors: inadequate funding; lack of suitable software; and inadequate resources for staff training, they are still seen to have been doing as much as they could. I doubt very much that this has been the case, and consider that *technophobia* as described above may well have had a part to play. Any who feel, however, that the *technophobic* response was irrational for academics might consider the Treasury's assumption as paraphrased in the terms of reference for the Review. In other words, the use of technology can make education significantly less costly only insofar as it substitutes for salaried staff (CTEC 1986, p.148).

I hope by now to have provided sufficient argument and evidence to support my contention that the notions of *technophilia* and *technophobia* can assist us in our understanding of the context within which distance educators work. It would appear that certain combinations of versions of self interest and of the effects of technological change make either perspective seem quite reasonable/rational. As will become very evident later in this essay, particularly in the concluding section it is my view that these seemingly increasingly reasonable perspectives do enormous damage. However, the technophile would probably willingly assent to the viewpoint expressed by Kasper in *Australia at the Crossroads: Our Choices to the Year 2000* when he states that:

> Technological change admittedly creates frictions and adjustment burdens, but those countries that adapt most quickly will also be those that will reap the benefits that always reward pioneers. (Kasper 1980, p.169)

Whereas the technophobe would very likely agree with the sentiments expressed by Roberts:

> Critics of modern technology broadly agree in levelling three general charges: it is too big, too centralised and too complex. It is not hard to expose the social evils to which these features lead. The workers expend their energies on fragmented tasks which have no meaning for them, in a production process generally so large-scale and intricate that it escapes the comprehension of all save a privileged few. The consumers are 'persuaded' and programmed to serve the ends of that productive machinery, whose enormous capital requirements make it unthinkable that the disposal of the product be left to the whims of a free, unmanipulated market. Increasingly the citizens lose any degree of autonomy, and become helplessly dependent on the centralised institutions called for by that centralised, gigantic economic machine. (Roberts 1979, p.79)

Once again you might like to consider these perspectives in relation to the technologies of distance education. So, for example, an international market in highly specialist distance-education courses concerning new technological developments might be a cost-effective way of assisting nations to become pioneers in Kasper's sense. Whilst on the other hand the idea of large, centralised monopoly providers of distance education whether on a national or even an international plane must raise questions of the type indicated in the quotation from Roberts.

MYTHS OF TECHNOLOGY

In this, the third section of the paper, I want to propose briefly that the two commonly held, influential, and seemingly reasonable perspectives outlined previously are far from reasonable for each relies upon untenable assumptions. Each relies upon a form of technological determinism; the technophile commending the process and the outcome whilst the technophobe criticises both process and outcome. An optimistic and a pessimistic orientation. However, as I have argued elsewhere (Campion 1981, p.103) neither optimism nor pessimism is an adequate response for both claim to know too much about (a) what will happen; and (b) what is good or bad. Both perspectives can generate an unduly passive orientation towards the future. By treating technology as an independent variable we effectively remove it from our control and by doing so allow it to be perceived as either a monster or a miracle. Furthermore this specific form of determinism which treats technological change as an independent variable effectively ignores the links between technological innovations and the socio-economic–political context in which they were generated.

Dickson argues that specific technologies are far from politically neutral when he states that:

> The institutionalisation of technology has meant that the choice of particular machines, or at least the control over this choice, remains in the hands of a dominant social class. And since technological innovation, as has already been suggested, is only carried out to the extent that it coincides with and maintains the interests of this class, new machines will only be introduced within the constraints that are imposed on the activities of the individual members of society. (Dickson 1974, p.177)

Barry Jones, a former Australian Minister for Science and Technology, argues against the deterministic position in the following fashion:

> The false premise on which technological determinism is based asserts that technology is a single entity, monolithic and incapable of being differentiated. There is no suggestion that there are varieties of technologies, or that it is possible for nations to choose between them. This is the 'cargo cult' view of technology; we wake up one morning to find a computer in the garden, it has arrived impersonally and we must take it or leave it as we find it. Technological determinists argue that if we reject high technology we will be punished; if we accept it, the pre-recorded birds will sing all day, and artificial lighting will abolish night. (Jones 1983, p.216)

Jones also alerts us to what he and others call the technological fix:

> Policy decisions are increasingly dominated by 'technological determinism'; we face the possibility of rule by technocrats. There is an increasingly fatalist conviction that the answer to every complex problem is to be found in a technological 'fix' – and the more complex the 'fix', the more likely it is to be accepted without debate. The range and scope of political argument in technically complex areas is diminished – indeed, it verges on being irrelevant. (Jones 1983, p.210)

On the other hand, opposition to this perspective all too frequently is couched in terms that suggest our problems are caused by technology whilst ignoring the political, social and economic forces which generate and sustain the particular technological configurations (Dickson 1974, p.176). Such an orientation can lead us to forget how our daily lives are constituted on or around technologies, for example, clocks, electricity or water supply. Once this is recognised it is more difficult for us to forget how intimately our lives are tied to the technologies available to us. Furthermore, as Dickson says (1974, p.184): 'A society's technology can never be isolated from the power structure, and technology can thus never be considered as politically neutral'.

Returning to the snowmobile example, we can realise that the ecological features of the situation into which a change is introduced also need to be taken into account. So, in the case of areas of Lappland where ski-doos (snowmobiles) came to be used for reindeer herding, the degree of forestation was a significant variable in their application. However, in Alaska where reindeer herding was not the purpose, a different set of ecological factors came into play. For example, a ski-doo, unlike dogs, will not stop at the edge of a crevasse and the consequences for the unwary driver are significant! Clearly, we need to understand the particular nature and context of an educational institution if we are to understand the consequences of technological change, both on the institution itself and upon those it affects. What 'crevasses' are there in distance education that the technological 'snowmobile' will charge straight into?

In this section I have intended to undermine both the *technophilic* and the *technophobic* perspectives by questioning an assumption which is common to both. However, before turning my attention to versions of the 'technological society' it is pertinent to mention the distinction used by Mandel between partial rationality and overall irrationality for this may also remind us to pay heed to the broader issues. Mandel states that:

> If economic rationality is ultimately regarded as economy of labour-time – as saving of human labour – then the inherent contradiction in capitalism between partial rationality and overall irrationality re-emerges in the paradox that the compulsion to save the maximum amount of human labour in the factory or the company leads to increasing waste of human labour in the society as a whole. (Mandel 1972, p.509)

TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE AND THE CHANGING NATURE OF WORK

By now we have not only become aware of polarised responses to technology which themselves generate and rely upon utopian and dystopian versions of the future, but we have also been reminded of the irrationality of treating technology as an undifferentiated whole. Consequently, no consensus can exist about the nature of a technological society. Given this lack of consensus it is appropriate that we give some attention to a range of possible futures, for as must be evident educational planning must be oriented to the future (Hummel 1977, p.181). Furthermore given that educational systems change more as a consequence of exogenous rather than endogenous pressures (Hummel

1977, p.182) it is clear that we would do well to consider possible future political, social, economic and cultural configurations.

What can we say about the contexts within which the education of tomorrow will be situated? If we refer briefly once again to Richard Badham's work 'The sociology of industrial and post-industrial societies' (1984) we find reference to post-capitalist theories, theories of post-classical capitalism, theories of post-industrialism, theories of hyper-industrialisation and theories of de-industrialisation, all with their advocates and adversaries and with further detailed subdivisions.

Distance educators who are unable to engage in debates on such issues can hardly be well placed to deal with the fears of the technophobes or the hopes of technophiles if those fears and hopes are grounded in specific versions of the societal outcomes of technological change, however vague, ill-informed or ill-articulated those assumptions might be. Having hinted at the complexity of the issues involved here I will step back and take a rather less sophisticated route but a route which none the less should display examples of the enormously different roles education could be called upon to adopt given different technological society scenarios.

What I shall do in this section is mention briefly a set of scenarios presented by A.G. Watts. His focus was upon the future of work but the scenarios he presents do, to some degree, illustrate a range of different problems for educators. Watts speaks of:

(a) An unemployment scenario: Essentially this is a continuation or worsening of the current situation where unemployment levels remain high or go even higher and dominant social attitudes continue to blame the unemployed for their predicament. (Watts 1983, p.119)

(b) A leisure scenario: As in (a) large numbers are unemployed but a change of attitude has occurred and the unemployed are now perceived as a new leisure class since, as a result of advances in technology employment is no longer necessary. (Watts 1983, p.130)

(c) An employment scenario: Access to employment is treated as a right and various forms of work sharing and employment creation are the norm. This scenario would involve structural changes in relation to the distribution of wealth and power. (Watts 1983, p.150)

(d) A work scenario: Work outside employment is revalued in such a way that the informal economics that is the black economy, the communal economy and the family economy are no longer denigrated. This would involve substantial changes in the current relations between the formal and informal economies; the current division of labour on the basis of sex-roles would require revision. (Watts 1983, p.169)

An important exercise for those concerned with the future of distance education would be to project how each of these scenarios might affect distance education. For example in the list that follows Watts contrasts the unemployment and the work scenarios to indicate what shifts would be required:

1	*From* education as narrowly preparing for vocational and other slots with little concern for developing a critical social awareness	*To* educate as a broad preparation for life; including social understanding and awareness and social criticism.
2	*From* education as a discrete experience, probably within and end-on to schooling	*To* education as a continuous life-long process of learning.
3	*From* education as based on limited access rather than choice by individuals	*To* education as based on open access widely available in varied forms within which choices can be made.
4	*From* education as a determinant of life-chances from an early age, on a basis which largely reproduces existing differentials and inequalities	*To* educate as a catalyst for social mobility throughout life.
5	*From* education as the prerogative of professionals based within the formal education institutions	*To* education as a task shared by and sometimes led by non-professional educators
6	*From* education as a centralised activity based on core curricula and centrally controlled standards	*To* education as a decentralised activity with curricula which are negotiated and evaluated locally (Watts 1983, p.184, p.185)

At this stage I would simply suggest that the proposals of distance educators are likely to be contingent upon the tasks attributed to the education system. Either of these two lists, for example, could be well served by distance educators but technology generated and organised in the service of the former list is likely to hinder the latter, and vice-versa. The important point is that distance educators need to be aware of these sorts of differences, for as Winner points out: 'Different ideas of social and political life entail different technologies for their realisation' (1977, p.325).

TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE AND THE CHANGING NATURE OF EDUCATION AND DISTANCE EDUCATION

In the previous section we noted that one of the consequences of the processes associated with the specific form of technological change which has been occurring in the West is a restructuring of the workforce. More precisely this process involves changes in the type of work performed, changes in the relations between occupations and changes in the proportions of the population involved in paid employment and of those not involved, together with differing demographic profiles for each of these sectors. So, for example, crafts which involved a multitude of skills have been replaced by more narrowly specialised occupations which involved a more limited range of activity. The blacksmith, for example, is replaced by the process worker on a metal fabrication production line.

Now clearly this process will have and has had effects upon the purposes of the formal education sector, but we need also to notice that each of the types of changes just referred to at the general societal level is also likely to have implications within the education sector. In essence, just as we now need to go to Pioneer World or a folk museum to see a blacksmith, so also in the not too distant future we might need to refer to a video-disc of educational history to see an academic as they are contemporarily understood. The shift from a discipline-based to a process-based division of labour currently occurring within areas such as distance education is likely to be of far more general application.

So on an intra-institutional level, the separation of course preparation from course administration and of both from tutoring and assessing, can lead to a division of labour which in Durkheimian terms produces a requirement for organic rather than mechanical solidarity. Furthermore, on an inter-institutional level, there is increasing division between research, teaching and administrative functions, which is exemplified in the shift towards centres of excellence in research being created in institutions A and B, whilst institutions C and D are recognised as, for example, general providers of distance education. And the setting up of new national committees to coordinate and administer these more complex divisions of institutional roles are indicative of structural changes which are contingent to a large degree upon developments in educational technology. I should perhaps point out that I am not by any means necessarily commending this direction of development. Rather I am trying to illustrate that the work of distance educators and educational technologists is not only another example of this more specialised division of labour but also that it has a crucial role in limiting or expanding the availability of choice in relation to the type of division of labour that will be available in the education sector in the future. Now clearly I am not saying that we have overall responsibility for this process or that we can act in an autonomous fashion. That such is not the case is illustrated at another level by the fact that those requested to prepare the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission (CTEC) 'Review of efficiency and effectiveness in higher education' were, as was indicated earlier, constrained by a set of specific terms of reference. However if each of us denies any responsibility for the whole then we should hardly be surprised if it appears that technology, rather than humans, determines what will happen.

Shepard makes the following points, using some quotations from Robert Boguslaw, which may help us to reorient our agenda in terms of the human, social and political questions which concern technology in distance education:

> (1) Our first concern should be about the impact of the social order on technology rather than the reverse. (2) Human beings are in control of their future. We should be asking which people and what set of values will control our destiny. (3) Should people be enslaved or destroyed, it will be by other people. There are no inanimate villains. (4) Technology is never neutral. It embodies a set of human values often latent, obscure, or deliberately disguised. 'One of the tasks of well-motivated individuals is to expose the precise nature of value choices embodied in various forms of technology'. (5) Technology cannot bring obsolescence to human values. 'Humanistic values can be made obsolete only by anti-humanistic or non-humanistic values'. (6) Technology creates no new values. Old values may be strengthened or distorted. (7) Serious students of technological change must participate in value decisions. (Shepard 1980, p.153)

What of the 'Review of efficiency and effectiveness in higher education' and its treatment of technology and distance education? In relation to the former, the to-say-the-least guarded nature of the Review's response is illustrated in the following quotations:

> It is satisfied however that there are some general principles which can and should be stated, particularly in view of the often exaggerated and unduly optimistic expectations which are sometimes held for the benefits which could flow from more extensive application of new computing and communications technologies in higher education. (CTEC 1986, p.149)

The report goes on to argue as follows:

> Some naively suggest that with the modern techniques of mass communication through broadcasting and the use of the satellite and through standardised computer packages, higher education can be delivered across the nation at very low cost. (CTEC 1986, p.150)

I wonder whether in the current context with a world daily newspaper now possible given the application of current technology, those in the newsprint industry would so readily dismiss proposals of this kind? Already we see an increasing interest in off-shore distance education: what, for example, if we viewed this growth area in an institutional environment which incorporated private institutions such as the Bond University funded by multinationals? Later in the report it is said that:

> In short, there is no evidence that new technologies for transmitting information and acquiring knowledge are likely, in the foreseeable future, to make a significant contribution to reducing the costs of delivering courses while maintaining the level of teaching effectiveness. (CTEC 1986, p.152)

Such a complacent attitude within the formal higher-education sector in a period of the most rapid technological change seems quite extraordinary. It seems to me that the 'head-in-the-sand' attitude overtly taken by the Review's authors on this matter is either indicative of a deep-seated technophobic response or alternatively is a little disingenuous and is designed merely to keep debate focused upon less dramatic possibilities.

What briefly of the Review's remarks concerning distance education? The chapter commences by pointing out that 'External studies courses play a vital role in providing education for those students who, for a variety of reasons, are unable to attend classes on campus'. (CTEC 1986, p.217). Once again it seems to me that the Review's authors adopt a focus which prevents many critical questions coming to the fore. For example, given the current seemingly never-ending fiscal crisis of the state, is it not possible that at some stage one of the reasons students will not be able to attend classes on campus might be that places on campuses, and perhaps even campuses, are not available in the same ratio to the level of effective demand as is currently the case? And might not this shift the role of external studies from the periphery further towards the centre? Unless the institutions are recognised to be performing primarily a custodial role it seems to me that this is a possibility, though again not one that I would necessarily favour, but one which nevertheless needs to be addressed.

Given the current trend towards an increasing separation of research from teaching, and the increasing specialisation of labour mentioned in relation to teaching, it seems to me likely that today's universities may well be remembered in the not too distant future much as the village common or the Cobb and Co. stagecoach is today. To paraphrase and redirect a remark of Barry Jones this will be a consequence of academia failing to generate any effective alternative view (Jones 1983, p.210).

Perhaps before moving on to the concluding section of this essay, I should refer once again to the introduction of snowmobiles into the reindeer-herding process in Lappland. Winner, drawing upon Pelto and Muller-Wille's work, states that:

> Possibly as a result of the physiological strain placed on pregnant female reindeer by the stampede running of mechanised roundups, the fertility and population of the herds fell off sharply. (Winner 1977, p.87)

I wonder whether innovative thinkers could be treated as analogous to pregnant reindeer? If so we need to ensure that our seemingly more efficient and effective educational processes do not have a similar result.

CONCLUDING COMMENT

In this final section I want to draw your attention to a debate which is in full swing in the analysis of industry but which it seems has as yet attracted little attention amongst theorists of distance education.

Two of the heavyweights of the distance-education community have recently produced articles in defence of their prior analyses of distance education. I refer to Holmberg's article in the ICDE bulletin of January 1990 entitled 'A paradigm shift in distance education? Mythology in the making' and Otto Peters's article in the November 1989 issue of *Open Learning* entitled 'The iceberg has not melted: Further reflections on the concept of industrialisation and distance teaching'.

In my view, the major weakness of both articles is that they display no effort to come to grips with the changes to industry in contemporary societies. These industrial changes, many of which are related to the technological issues that have been discussed previously, have produced (and continue to produce) profound structural changes to the way work is managed, organised and implemented. The analyses by both Holmberg and Peters are bereft of such considerations and I wish to conclude here with a brief insight into the sorts of analyses of industry which would sharpen our thinking about distance education. Mathews makes the point that:

> Technologies can be 'tools of change' – provided their design is conceived as a participative, and ultimately, a political process. In this sense, a project of 'democratisation of technology' is feasible; it looms large as the great 'unfinished project' of the labour

> movement – and as the great intellectual and political challenge of our time. (Mathews 1989, p.184)

Mathews is writing about post-Fordist practices in industry whereby, through a more open, participative and democratic workplace, greater productivity, efficiency and economic success is achieved (Mathews 1989, back cover). To be blunt, through the technologies available to us today, for example cheaper more user-friendly and flexible computing, communications and print, together with new technologies which could be developed through participation, a very different type of distance-education network can be envisaged: one which is more decentralised, democratic, participatory, open and flexible (Campion 1989, p.12).

Such a system would do much to overcome the diametrically opposed responses referred to earlier in this paper, but as is revealed by Mathews a decision in favour of such an orientation is essentially political. He points to the lower rates of success in using new technologies in the USA when compared with their introduction in certain Scandinavian, German and Japanese firms. He argues, that in the latter, post-Fordist development strategies have been used (Mathews 1989, p.59). Furthermore, by displaying these differential success rates with the same technologies he illustrates that the changes in productivity and flexibility are not technology driven.

Mathews provides us with an important challenge:

> Our task is to formulate specific policies around the issues of new technology, work organisation, skill formation and industrial relations that will favour a post-Fordist strategy of flexible specialisation, to replace the Fordist structures and processes currently existing... We are at an exciting historical juncture. The chance to eliminate Tayloristic practices, and thereby release the creativity and imagination that has been dammed up in workers forced to submit to the discipline of mass production, has never been more real. (Mathews 1989, p.39)

Those who see distance education as a form of industrialised educational practice should pause and reflect on what form of industrialisation they have in mind. It may be that technology has changed the nature of work and industry to such an extent that their view of industrialisation is outdated and, therefore, their conceptualisation of distance education is as redundant as the blacksmith.

CHAPTER 10

TOWARDS A CRITICAL EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

DAVID HARRIS

INTRODUCTION

I WANT TO ARGUE that educational technology has both a good side (critical, emancipatory) and a bad side (uncritical, tending to domination). Tracing the origins of these contradictory tendencies, in order to free the good side, involves an understanding of the social or political context of the development and use of educational technology, and a move away from the technical or abstract aspects – as, for example, in developing classifications or models of teaching systems (Lewis 1986).

This is a simple and obvious argument, although for reasons discussed below, it has been hard to persuade people to take it. The political implications that follow are also obvious but strangely unpopular: educational technology must be politicised, it must be the subject of a struggle to liberate and use it for critical ends. At present, educational technology remains marginal to critical analyses of education, which tend to be based on more general philosophical or Marxist positions. It also remains marginal to the 'practical' management of teaching systems as financial considerations come to dominate, and accountancy becomes the central management skill.

Educational technology still remains a rather obscure province inhabited by enthusiasts, often linked in public perceptions with machinery or modernisation, liable to be ghettoised and ignored, rather than analysed and used. Yet important concrete and critical studies of teaching and learning have been developed under the aegis of the discipline, and these have raised real questions for conventional forms of teaching: these questions need to be deepened and pursued, and developed beyond the limits of current projects.

The classic accounts of educational technology can help preserve these self-imposed limits, since they operate with psychologistic or technical considerations only, and discussions are often highly abstract as a result. It is as if the approach had no history, no roots in political projects, no social determinants or consequences. Even the critical strains can still be trapped within these considerations (Harris 1988).

This abstract quality can be heightened because educational technology often has to operate within the peculiar environment of educational institutions which, until recently at least, had to maintain an idealised myth of their own operations and organisation: this myth, as others have noted (Lawn & Ozga 1987), suggests that teachers and lecturers are motivated solely by a professional commitment to ideas or to a dispassionate consideration of what is most effective for teaching and learning to take place. In higher education, where this myth is particularly strong (for very sound material reasons), educational technology has often appeared as esoteric 'pure' research, abstract philosophy, as 'systems theory' or 'artificial intelligence'.

With artificial intelligence, another current of myth can be responsible for this apparent abstraction. The glamorous and little understood world of computer technology sustains a myth of the autonomous thinking machine that seems to interact with human users, hold conversations with them, respond to them intelligently, and be capable of human forms of communication. The temptations for some distance educators are enormous. The ordinary user of software is not interested in the actual work involved in transforming information, and in developing the mechanisms which produce these effects. And ordinary readers of research reports in artificial intelligence are also unlikely to be able to progress very far beyond the 'gee whizz' stage of uncomprehending admiration. Yet the cold, objective accounts of projects in natural science are produced *post hoc*, and can be deconstructed to reveal the social context of their production, as in Mulkay's (1979; 1985) research: so too the results of work in artificial intelligence deserve to be patiently disentangled, demystified, and subjected to critique. Until that (heroic!) labour is undertaken, we see only the finished public, objective, rational face of artificial intelligence projects, with all the work rooted in its social and political context hidden from public view, and beyond public interest or concern.

In other sectors of the education system, for example, in training, educational technology has taken on a more familiar aspect, as a modernising force, only too closely allied with actual politics. It is still unlikely, however, that an adequate account of the influence of these forces can be found within educational technology itself. Here, too, an obvious alternative political perspective – Marxism say – can be deployed, but it is almost too much of a sledgehammer to take to such a tempting nut. Training can be dismissed by analysts on immediate, often moral grounds, as beneath the dignity of critics, without too much of an elaborate attempt to penetrate the principles.

A critical understanding should, perhaps, move towards the old classic goal of critique which, roughly, was to preserve all the knowledge and understanding developed already and yet somehow go beyond or transcend that stock of knowledge, to introduce new concepts to locate internal disputes and understandings. Such an approach would move the arcane disputes on to more conventional territory, making knowledge available to non-specialists, and even helping explain the disputes in a new way to insiders themselves. Some kind of account of the sociology or politics of knowledge would be required in my view.

This raises the last set of problems in my introduction. What kind of critical framework is available and adequate to do critique of this kind, to encompass and transcend all the kinds of educational technology mentioned here? Marxist accounts have been mentioned already, and a rather basic sociology of knowledge alluded to. Mulkay's work draws upon a different critical linguistic tradition. Do we simply work with whatever critical resources are appropriate? If so, we run the risk of the rather easy option of rebuking educational technology simply for not being a range of preferred alternatives – not being Marxism, then not being a sociology of knowledge, then not being critical linguistics, and so on. Or is there one major consistent critical approach that can incorporate a number of different aspects in one powerful synthesis? My own work in distance education drew heavily upon themes developed in 'classical critical theory' and in Habermas, for example both are powerful syncretic traditions developing critique in the sense defined above.

Yet distance educationists interested in general theory of this kind must be aware of the crisis induced by trends such as 'postmodernism'. Postmodernism involves, for example, a deep scepticism about 'foundational' arguments that claim to be in possession of privileged concepts (such as 'mode of production' or 'patriarchy', or 'negative dialectics' or 'quasi-transcendental human interests') with which they reinterpret and critique other discourses. These concepts cannot be deployed in critique without 'incoherence' or 'dogmatism' (Hindess 1977). Behind such incoherence and dogmatism lie undisclosed tactical, rhetorical or (micro) political intents. One strand of postmodernist thought directs us to consider all arguments alike, educational technology as well as critiques of it, as 'narratives', stories to be told as compellingly and convincingly as possible, but without any further need to attempt to develop or use *the* narrative, the 'metanarrative' that will replace and transcend all the others (Lyotard 1986).

Although riddled with paradox itself (Is postmodernism a new metanarrative? Do we need a postmodern theory or a theory of a postmodern society? (Bauman 1987)), this sort of scepticism has had an effect in the work of Habermas himself. It is too complex a dispute to summarise adequately here, but for the purposes of this paper the main developments are:

- The work is now much more sensitive to the concrete and contradictory developments of general processes such as 'rationalisation', a key term much deployed in earlier critiques of technology.

- There is a notion of an 'ideal speech act' which embodies a full account of the different types of levels of argument, against which it is possible to detect more limited types of argument such as 'distorted communication'.
- At the most general level, the work has undergone a final and full 'linguistic turn', which places communication at the heart of the whole enterprise and enables connections to be made with powerful critical debates elsewhere.

I have tried to employ all of these themes in my own critiques of forms of educational communication, including educational technology in distance education, with a suitably modest postmodernist aim of raising questions and possibilities. The rest of the paper deepens the above arguments (taking them in order), and supplies some concrete examples. Needless to say, I am not claiming a uniquely privileged status for this analysis, nor am I denying that another one could be developed, based on another critical perspective (derived from Giddens, say, or Foucault, or Wittgenstein or MacIntyre).

I have argued above that tactical, micropolitical considerations appear to lie at the heart of even the finest of classical argument, so it would be absurd to pretend that this highly tentative piece takes a stand somehow above these issues. It would bore and possibly embarrass a reader to list the precise set of motives that lead me to remain with Habermas, but a desire to appear as a relatively original contributor to the debate about educational technology, to 'talk up the new' (Lyotard 1986), to exploit past labour in a demanding field, and to further a modest career as a Habermasian critic of a previously over-specialised field, would feature fairly centrally, probably more so than any lofty desire to expose rationality to Reason's critique.

THE DIALECTIC OF RATIONALISATION

Some of the contemporary debates about educational technology reflect the terms of Weber's more general work on industrialisation as rationalisation. Briefly, rationalisation involves the dominance of a particular kind of rational calculation (*zweckrationalitat*), devoted to selecting the most efficient means to secure a given operationalised end. This form of rational action provides modern industrial production with its dynamism and productivity, but it begins to spread throughout social life, first to rational administration, like state bureaucracies, then to more and more of the public sphere of politics, culture, education etc. *Zweckrationalitat* displaces other forms of rationality as it spreads, especially *wertrationalitat* ('value rationality') – the rational pursuit of some agreed ultimate value (such as 'a good life for all'). This loss of values in the public sphere, reduces social life to a soulless mechanism, an 'iron cage'. The rationalisation of public life leaves a value gap, so to speak, as the kind of ultimate values mentioned above become merely private concerns. This gap can be filled with public, widespread, irrational outbursts of pseudo-values, as in German fascism or, in Adorno's example of periodic witch-hunting in Protestant communities (Adorno & Horkheimer 1979). These analyses show terrible social consequences of rationalisation, a dimension undeveloped in those accounts focusing solely upon rationalisation as a technique, for example, in 'scientific management', or in the attempt by Peters to apply *zweckrationalitat* to distance education (Peters 1989).

Clearly, educational technology can be seen as a form of rationalisation too, with its concerns for means and not values (a token concern for 'aims' quickly yields to operationalised 'objectives'), with its 'scientific' and calculative or evaluative procedures (rational curriculum planning and 'effective communication'), and its focus upon the rational production and distribution of course materials. Romantic or 'progressive' critics (e.g. Stenhouse 1975) often want to suggest that the approach has omitted the value aspects of education, such as the notion of 'education for its own sake' or the 'subjectivity' or 'humanism' of the participants.

The mechanisms which drive the spread of rationalisation are likely to be found in some fundamental processes in capitalism for Marxists, rather than in a series of unique combinations of impulses from economic and idealistic spheres as in Weber (Marcuse 1972). Clearly, there is a material interest for capitalists in being able to control industrial production rationally – it enables greater productivity, the de-skilling of work, the mechanisation of production (which then transfers control still more firmly to the hands of those who own the machines), and so on (Braverman 1974; see also Giddens 1982, ch.14; Salaman 1981). It is also possible to derive the functions of the state (not just the government apparatus) from this analysis, seeing it as having to administer an increasingly complex system of labour and consumption (e.g. as in Campion's (1989) work on 'post-Fordism' and distance education or more broadly in Hall & Jacques, 1989).

Educational technology in this analysis becomes a means of imposing this logic of accumulation even into education, especially distance education: educational materials become commodities to be produced, purchased, consumed (e.g. in some status economy, Harris 1987a), and exchanged (for grades and credentials). Educational technology encourages students to see materials in this way, directly (by offering rational 'study skills'), and indirectly (by restructuring knowledge and imposing rational conventions upon learning, and above all through a rational assessment scheme to which students must accommodate).

Marxist analysis is largely pessimistic, and it can lead to a reductionism and a loss of concrete insight: once we insist all can be explained by a logic of capitalism, even if it is allowed to be an uneven and contradictory one, there is little else to discover or discuss (see Hirst 1977).

One of the earliest examples of rational planning appears in the work of the British philosopher Jeremy Bentham in the early nineteenth century. Bentham was keen to design a rational school system to overcome inefficiencies in the old systems, partly, no doubt, to provide capital with a suitable labour force. But strong ethical considerations also feature in the proposals (rational instruction would also do away with the need for degrading corporal punishment), and Bentham was among the first to point out the 'good side' of a rational reordering of knowledge and teaching – rational principles become public, they permit the participation of anyone who cares to master them, and the hold of 'tradition' and the restrictive practices of elitist pedagogues is broken (Harris 1987b). Any modern educational technologist would recognise the intention behind Benthamite procedures like this:

> ... the parts ... [of a subject] ... must exhaust the contents of the whole ... the information contained in a work ... can be complete ... [if not] ... the form in which a work presents itself will be no other than that of a confused heap of unconnected fragments. (Bentham 1983, p.218)

The establishment of the Open University in the United Kingdom involved winning consent, rather than emerging somehow inevitably, with substantial efforts required at the level of ideas and politics as well as economics. Educational technology played a major role here in shaping and legitimising the teaching system (although the rational calculation of costs and benefits was as important), and the 'good' side of educational technology appears clearly in the well-known 'open' aspects of the organisation.

Both the complexity and the interrelation of the 'good' and 'bad' sides of rationalisation can be seen in the development of an assessment system at the Open University. Although there had long been scepticism about the traditional methods of assessing students, the analyses of assessment done at the Open University produced irresistible evidence of the inadequacy of the usual approach. This work required considerable patience and courage, since claims that academics can directly and reliably assess the worth of student work lie very close to the whole ideology of professionalism. Indeed, very few academics in conventional universities would be willing to submit their assessment practices to such scrutiny, but the peculiarly 'open' nature of the Open University teaching system made it possible in this case.

The critical analysis began by demonstrating wide variations in the distributions of assessment scores between faculties. Claims that these wide variations could be explained by inherent differences in subject matter or student characteristics were put in doubt by the discovery of wide variations within faculties, between different assignments in the same course. These variations were spectacular enough to persuade the course writers involved that there was a genuine problem.

The simplest rational procedure – to question the claims of existing practice, then gather evidence and test a few claims against the evidence – had dissolved the complacent myth that experienced academics could somehow directly intuit valid scores for students, relying only on their 'experience' (Harris 1987a).

Subsequent experiences in conventional higher education in the United Kingdom have convinced me that this myth is still deeply entrenched. Few academics are trained in assessment design, few are aware of the effects of their policies and practices, and many are content to rely upon the confidential procedures of final Examination Boards to cloak the often desperate last-minute *ad hoc* adjustments which are made to scores.

Yet when it came to policy, the wielders of the rational critique became uncritical and secretive in their turn. Their own recommendations incorporated all sorts of assumptions about the 'need' to produce a conventional distribution of student grades. They suggested, for example, that the distributions be 'standardised'. This outcome would enable a number of standard statistical tests of reliability to be deployed, so there were technical advantages. However, it would have the effect also of changing fundamentally the original policy of the assessment scheme, stripping assessment of any diagnostic functions and making rational discrimination among students the main function instead.

It was clear that a certain anxiety was felt by the assessment analysts about the reactions of 'employers' and colleagues in other universities if an open university were to produce unusual distributions. This anxiety was not based on any evidence about the actual distributions of graded degrees awarded by British universities: in fact there seem to be wide variations rather than some established pattern or accepted standard distribution (CNAA 1983).

I have described the precise conjunction and interplay of these technical and political considerations elsewhere (Harris 1987a). Both rational analyses and irrationally conservative politics played a part in the 'colonisation' and de-radicalisation of the project to critique and challenge the closures in British higher education.

The tendency for rationalisation to have an emancipatory and critical phase to be followed by a conservative and unreflective phase has been documented, but it is still worth trying to explain why this should happen. How can an approach be critical and courageous at first, and then uncritical and subservient to dominant interests?

One explanation might be that the critical phase was only tactical, designed to demoralise opposing groups in the struggle for power and influence in the institution. Having seized the initiative, advocates of rational assessment techniques could then proceed to implement their preferred version of policy, one that would produce a flow of resources and influence to them. The tactics here would involve a hyper-critical stance towards the opposition, followed by presenting the preferred version as inevitable, supported by powerful groups, beyond critique, technically superior or whatever.

This version of institutional policies has been boosted by recent accounts of micropolitics in education (Ball 1987). Marxists would wish to argue for a wider context, that the repressive sides of rationalisation have their origins ultimately in the interests of capital, as suggested above. Individual proponents are to some extent duped by these interests, it could then be argued, apparently acting autonomously, but finding their policies helping to reproduce or modernise capitalism 'behind their backs'. Such is the ideological power marshalled by capitalism, this analysis would suggest, that the basic values and procedures of the system now do appear as simply 'the reality' to which all practical policies must adjust.

Critical theory suggests a slightly different tack. There is a dynamic operating at the level of intellectual work itself, suggests Adorno, (see Rose 1978) to 'finish' or 'close' a set of ideas, to stop criticising, and take over practices and concepts from existing accounts (often un-thought out ideologies). These accommodating tendencies are especially strong, of course, with ideas that set out to be practical, applied or technological. Technological success is a guarantee and reassurance of the correctness of the ideas, and an important source of personal security and identity. The main exemplar of the success of the whole tendency is indeed the system of industrial technology in production, so there is some economic and political pressure behind the processes too.

The final set of pressures to conform operate at the level of individual personality. The prospect of a life of critical purity can seem attractive and heroic, but there is a dreadful cost in terms of social and political isolation; the very fate usually attributed to Adorno (Piccone 1978). Few theorists would be willing to operate with the constant insecurity and doubt of the kind of critical stance required to avoid all 'identarianism', closure, and accommodation.

This sort of account does seem to get close to how the particular development of assessment policy at the OU occurred. There was a sense in which the implications of the policy emerged over time. The consultants concerned began with deliberate intentions and then lost control, at least partially, as new implications appeared. The project seemed to be driven by a perceived need to be consistent, to maintain a certain 'professional' and 'disinterested' stance, pursuing implications for their own sake.

All of us probably know what it feels like to be carried away by projects, as possibilities and dilemmas arise which no-one predicted. It becomes difficult to turn back, to recover the original intentions. This is doubly so for those specialising in 'scientific' or 'value-free' projects: when the political and social implications arise (as they do inevitably) the project can seem to drift away from the specialist. The experts find themselves on unfamiliar ground, discussing apparently irreconcilable 'philosophies' or political positions. This familiar process is very common, and is the most obvious sense in which we might grasp the general tendency for value-free projects to end by subordinating themselves to the values of the dominant order, as in Adorno's essay (1978).

EDUCATION AND DISTORTED COMMUNICATION

The rationalisation theme has also been developed from a particular direction – what might be called a humanist orientation. Humanist approaches want to contrast actual forms of social relations with some ideal unconstrained form. This ideal form is attainable, since human beings are essentially creative and cooperative. A much fairer society could exist if only human subjectivity could be fully liberated. The essential goodness or creativity of human beings has been lost, corrupted, or alienated in existing social relations, in this case through the ironic or unintended consequences of rationalisation as described above.

Humanist approaches are still popular, and underpin a number of critical appreciations of educational technology in distance education (e.g. Farnes 1976; Morgan 1976, 1987; Rowntree 1975). However, those problems with 'foundational' approaches outlined in the opening section apply here too: the privileged concepts (the supposedly fundamental characteristics of human beings to think creatively, engage in dialogues or whatever) cannot be deployed without incoherence or dogmatism. To parody the position for a moment, when human beings are mature and reflective, this somehow must arise from their creativity (the dogmatism in the approach); when they are being more dull and conformist, or using their freedom to resist any critical engagements with our materials, they are simply showing how deeply they have been alienated by the system (incoherent use of the term 'creativity'). As with all foundational arguments, it is possible to use ploys like this to provide a self-justifying argument.

What can stand as an alternative to the distorted social relations of rationalised societies? Attention to types of communication rather than residual human qualities or subjectivity became more and more prominent in Habermas's work for a number of reasons (Bernstein 1979). The main technical advantage is to ground a notion of critique, to justify a critical stance, by reference to something shared and universal, something indisputably creative and democratic, something obtainable and present, but something which escapes from the old problems of humanism – language itself. This 'linguistic turn' helped to organise a number of critical themes.

For example, early critiques of positivism saw it as unnecessarily restricted to a particular set of 'scientific' concepts, 'facts' and forms of arguments, for example. This particular set had emerged, for various reasons, as the very basis of proper knowledge itself, and was seen as universally applicable. This claim to universal applicability and propriety could be subverted in critical theory by revealing the considerable practical struggles that have to go on to make the real world fit the apparently rigorous concepts of positivism (as in the use of working definitions, simplified laboratory conditions, various evasive *ceteris paribus* clauses and so on).

Adorno (1976) suggested that in this respect, positivism still resembles magic in its desire to subdue and simplify the world in order to manipulate it. Habermas (1984) argues for the crucial role in positivism of far from rigorous procedures, like rhetoric (persuading fellow scientists to see the world in a particular way so that the concepts fit the most important cases) or other kinds of persuasive manoeuvres, even though these sorts of arguments could never be acknowledged openly.

I have used these points myself in my critique of the scientistic claims of educational technology at the OU. In working with course teams, educational technologists were forced to rely upon considerable powers of interpretation, selective applications, persuasion, appeals to authority, references to simplified experimental work, abstractions, *post-hoc* rationalisations (in the Freudian sense this time!), and even superstitious ritual to produce those apparently objective and universal lists of objectives or diagrams of goal-directed systems that the students got to see (Harris 1987a).

In Habermas's (1984) analyses of social and political theory, rather than science, a complementary critique arises. Other important types of communication are identified, especially the 'strategic communication' that dominates much social science. Here, Habermas points to the ways in which American sociology (especially) places at the centre of its models the kind of interaction in which one party attempts to gain some personal advantage over the other. One could trace this through from, say, Deweyan pragmatism, to Goffman's studies of strategic interaction. Critical analyses are found in this American work – but there is no attempt to develop beyond strategic communication as a type. Once again, empirical, 'value-free' social sciences dignify the *status quo*.

In his analysis of the modern state, Habermas (1976) also introduces the notion of distorted communication. Briefly, the state has to pose as a universal body, standing for the whole community, in order to win popular assent, but it is still dominated inevitably by specific interests (principally those of capital). A peculiar kind of communication attempts to gloss this contradiction – communication apparently universal in its scope but which quietly privileges specific images, values, and accounts of the world. Political discourses about democracy and the role of the public can be seen in this way – somehow, for example, parliamentary democracy or a free market becomes privileged as the only, the best, or the most advanced form, acting in the interests of all. Other analysts have made similar points, with communication at more specific levels – public relations materials, or advertising, could be analysed in this way, and much of the earlier work on the culture industry could be included (Adorno & Horkheimer 1979).

Educational technology also often employs the forms of strategic and distorted communication, seen in the assumptions made by instructional designers in distance education about the learners using teaching materials. Students are to be led strategically towards mastery, for example, in some formulations, or simply trained or told. For examples of distorted communication, the writing conventions (or logical rules in computer-assisted versions) are assumed to be universal, natural, objective, or simply obviously shared. Of course, like all conventions, they are nothing of the kind, but represent the beliefs, preferences, styles and skills of elite groups.

This apparent universality of interest is never systematically tested or researched, and 'deviant' motives or interests are little understood or acknowledged. In some versions of educational technology in particular, this assumption of universality led to a puzzled response to demands for 'dialogue' with students (or, indeed, with colleagues) – what was there to argue about exactly? Were not the real, universal interests of the various public audiences surely best left to be clarified by the experts using their specialist, audience-centred methods? Of course the specialists would submit their policies to periodic consultation exercises or plebiscites.

Other versions of educational technology are more interactive – I shall return to those later. To anticipate another argument discussed later: conventional education can be understood as distorted communication just as clearly as technologically orientated forms of distance education.

What would undistorted communication look like? The work of Freire (1972) is sometimes seen as apposite. Notions like 'conscientization', and the whole attempt to ground educational projects in the pre-established interests of the students, are very appealing, but there are problems in generalising from Freire's rather specific interest in literacy in developing countries. Further, despite a complex theoretical position, Freire's work probably shares the technical weaknesses of the humanist accounts outlined above.

Habermas's position focuses on the emancipatory potentials of language itself, displayed best in the discussion of an 'ideal speech act' (Habermas 1979). Language can, in principle, permit any competent speaker to raise questions about the validity of claims made by any other speaker. Speakers may claim to be speaking the truth, or offering a sincere or appropriate account (there are three basic types of validity claims in Habermas's schema), and, in the ideal speech act, questions can be raised at any time about any parts of the discourse. Participants can raise and develop claims of their own, and the conduct of the debate is governed only by the force of the best argument.

This ideal speech act is within the competence of any speaker, and thus a fundamental kind of undistorted communication is immanent in ordinary speech. There are a number of practical implications to be drawn, even though Habermas himself is content to remain at a very general level of theory, and to suggest, rather cautiously, that the general role of the ideal speech act is to enable us to assert it as a counterfactual possibility (see Habermas 1982). Perhaps it is better, then, to see the ideal speech act as a kind of permanent guarantee, in principle, that distorted, strategic or any other kind of restricted communication can always be challenged, questioned and resisted. The implications of Habermas's ideal speech act for the practice of distance education seem to be a creative challenge.

Habermas also seems to suggest that undistorted communication is essential for the proper development and reproduction of social life: distorted or strategic communication leads to various kinds of social crisis. Briefly, users of such communication, run long-term risks. Strategic communicators can trigger an escalating 'legitimation crisis', a radical questioning of their authority should their overall strategy fail. The long-term pursuit of distorted communication can end in 'motivational crisis' as the recipients are so successfully manipulated that they cease to have interests or independent capacities of their own (Habermas 1976).

These points are developed in terms of an account of the modern State in Habermas's work, but again there are echoes in more specific work at the level of the organisation. A heavily top-down management style, imposing a restricted form of communication, runs the risk of delegitimation in the form of barely-concealed subversion, mockery and ridicule among underdogs at every little mistake or error (see Nicholls & Benyon 1977; Willis 1977), or an un-motivated ritualism as workers go through the motions, obeying the letter but not the spirit of the instructions they receive (see Merton 1968). If educational technology can be seen as a type of restricted communication, it might be possible to anticipate similar reactions among recipients of the instructional packages. I believe these reactions can be detected among some OU students (Harris 1987a) and are probably a feature of distance students internationally.

I have also attempted to use Habermas's ideal speech act as a basis for more concrete analyses of actual communications in distance education. The work of Pask, for example, is well known in educational technology for its development of highly structured, interactive, computer-assisted teaching schemes (Pask 1976; Pask & Scott 1973). These are unusually flexible and student-centred, and offer undoubted advantages for students wishing to become skilled in a body of subject matter in their own ways. The schemes are particularly sensitive to opportunities for novelty, and encourage students to find connections between arguments that have not been anticipated by the original experts. Such novelty would be less easy to generate in conventional, less rational, teaching.

However, Pask insists on using terms like 'conversational learning' to describe these interactions. There are other terms and figures of speech too which run together the operations of computer programs and human speech, so frequently and persuasively in Pask's work, that it is easy to forget that these are metaphors or analogies or displacements or elisions. If Habermas is right, the difference between human communication and computer simulations of it lies precisely in the open-ended demands for justification of arguments that humans can make of each other, and the ways in which judgments of the force of arguments emerge out of discussion. Computer programs can embody the justifications and judgments of humans, but can never possess them themselves, at least not until they can develop motives, or emancipatory intents. There is no way to raise a doubt with a program about its sincerity.

Students using programs are not holding conversations. Pask's programs are, technically speaking, combinations of strategic and distorted communication, despite their admirable clarity (compared with the original prose), and despite their genuinely educational intent. The programs represent a specific view of knowledge as universal, and there is a pre-established set of concepts within which choices can be exercised.

Applying very general theories of communication to examples where they were never intended to be tried leads to interesting conclusions. Some strategic communication can have a good intent if it is 'educational', designed to help individuals break out from even more blocked or restricted forms of communication they had before they undertook the experience. Habermas comes close to this position in his own considerations of, say, psychoanalysis: the patient has to submit to an alternative account of his or her own condition to make any progress. In another exchange, Habermas agrees that some simplification of the issues can be justified in politics, if any initial progress is to be made. The claims made by these approaches to be valid unconditionally can be seen to be a kind of beneficial strategic manipulation, designed to persuade clients to take the new approach seriously enough to begin to make progress. Those claims can be opened to discussion at a later stage (Habermas 1982).

A point made by Kuhn (1972) in his celebrated discussion of 'normal science' offers another justification of a staged approach: natural science makes progress by scientists being uncritical enough to accept the non-logical basis of their 'paradigms' long enough to make genuine explorations and tests. Critical breaks with whole paradigms, the philosophical break-throughs that led to, say, Einsteinian physics instead of Newtonian, came when the old paradigm had been believed and adhered to long enough for it to have been thoroughly tested. Social science never makes any progress, Kuhn argues, precisely because there is no shared belief, and communication is too open and critical.

Marxists have also argued for a necessary mixture of (self) critical science and ideology for progress at the level of thought and social formation (Canguilhem 1981). The fully open interchanges of the ideal speech act seem to be rather a distant goal (no more so than in distance education), but still worth asserting against the claims of systems who consider themselves really universal, but too remote to act as much of a guide to actual, mixed, forms of communication.

Mixed modes of communication

In practice, simple polarities are seldom useful, I want to suggest, although debates about educational technology are usually conducted in precisely these polarised terms: educational technology stands against chaos, rational procedures against mere intuition, progressive views find no place for concepts like instruction or proficiency, dialogue opposes telling, universal romanticism confronts universal scientism. One particularly unhelpful polarity is the one between distance education and traditional, face-to-face education.

The latter is badly in need of a thorough critique, especially in higher education. For years, traditional education has confidently been asserted as the only method suitable for proper teaching. Its advocates have conjured with words like dialogue and critical discussion, or with concepts like the cut and thrust of argument in groups, as if all these good things were somehow axiomatic to on-campus teaching. I want to suggest that, although all these desirable outcomes are possible face to face, they are not necessarily found there by any means.

On-campus teachers have ways of closing off the possibilities of dialogue even though they are in the actual vicinity of their listeners. They ask closed questions, impose closed tasks, tell closed stories with a predetermined and inevitable ending (as in the realist style discussed in the next section), and retreat behind uncompromising styles of speech requiring considerable 'cultural capital' even to penetrate (let alone become adept). Experienced lecturers use a variety of 'put-downs' to deal with questions or interruptions (including threats of immediate public ridicule or future retribution), and they draw upon a range of micro strategies to have their say. Educational researchers have charted these techniques in speech in schooling (see Doyle & Carter 1986; Rowntree 1987), and I have begun to chart them (having noticed them in others, and used them myself!) in higher education in the United Kingdom. Sometimes, such techniques can be justified in precisely the strategic sense outlined above, but sometimes they are best seen as the result of unclarified professional politics, as deliberate coping strategies, or as 'symbolic violence' (Bourdieu 1977).

Closure can be studied from the student perspective too. My own view is that students often do not wish to take advantage of opportunities for dialogue, whether this be offered in face-to-face or in other materials. The cheerful assumption that students are primarily interested in learning something new is also in need of challenge. Students too have strategic interests, in achieving good grades for the least effort, for example, or in preserving their own views and self-esteem in seminars. Of course, one can sympathise with this, and note, for example a commonly mentioned reason for Open University (UK) students choosing distance learning: it helped them avoid the bores, posers and show-offs (as well as the people likely to challenge their pet assumptions) they had met in conventional education (Harris 1987a).

Some students may have to be shocked out of complacency, and others massively reassured and brought to feel a sense of involvement, before they can be brought into a critical relation with the discourses they are to study, and before they have an active interest in raising claims about the validity of the communication. Conventional educators and educational technologists alike are becoming aware at last of the problem they tend to call motivation, especially of adult students (Henderson 1984) – although this has psychologistic undertones. Here, they have much to learn from techniques and styles of writing, speaking and broadcasting that take as their central concerns the complex reactions of the audience, and actually try to engage these rather than treating them as noise.

A *NEW WAVE* IN EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY?

Educational technology has cut itself off from whole traditions of effective communication by its adherence to the old 'rational planning' paradigm. That paradigm has been fundamentally weakened, precisely because it was tried and found wanting in its most spectacular and consistent applications at the OU. By its own lights, many of the techniques embraced by the approach have found to be of unprovable merit: even 'advance organisers' or 'in text questions', for example (Gibbs, Lockwood, Morgan, and Taylor, 1982; Melton 1984). Paradoxically, they persist, but now more as magic incantations than as solid techniques of proven worth. Why should we continue to employ the techniques? Why solemnly list objectives at the beginning of the material, or police our writing for (apparently unproblematic) 'incomplete arguments, omissions, obvious redundancy, structure, sequencing and coherence, general signposting?' (Riley 1984). Why simulate the chopped logic of the computer program or the programmed learning text? The once sacred principles can now be seen for what they are – mere conventions, owing as much to aesthetic judgments as to scientific calculations.

Most educational technologists would be reeling in horror at this point, thinking, no doubt, of the worst excesses of conventional academic prose: scholastic displays, impenetrable jargon, endless qualifications and prevarications and other closure devices. But this is another misleading dichotomy; academic writing need feature neither the pseudo-precision of classic educational technology nor the incantatory prose of a European *homo academicus [sic]* (Bourdieu 1988). Instead, a whole range of popular and educational techniques and styles might be pursued.

Little has been done to analyse the peculiarities of pedagogical writing or speech (Sharrock & Anderson 1986), especially in higher education. In the absence of exhaustive analysis, it might be profitable to pursue one deliberately polemical theme, developed out of an interesting convergence between work in education and media (precisely the sort of convergence a new-wave educational technology should try to pursue). A number of commentators have noticed and developed this convergence which turns upon discussion of realism as a convention in written and broadcast materials (see Evans & Nation 1989a; Wexler 1982).

Realism in this tradition becomes not so much a matter of producing authentic details in an account as organising a hierarchy of narratives, according to Maccabe (1981). In classical realism a number of accounts of events are offered (by characters in a novel, for example), and the reader is invited to explore each of these in turn. A certain pleasurable 'narrative tension' can be introduced by revealing anomalies or contradictions in these initial accounts. The reader's puzzlement is finally resolved (leading to more pleasure) by the emergence of a deeper narrative 'underneath' the first set of accounts, which delivers the complete truth that those cannot grasp. The classic detective story follows this scheme, of course, but so do many popular films, novels, and television programs: we, the viewers, are in possession of the 'real facts' about the intentions of Henry Ramsey (in *Neighbours*), but most of the other characters misunderstand him in ways that involve, intrigue, and please millions of viewers. (The soap opera is particularly good at offering the viewer a privileged position of knowledge and awareness, from which to view the characters struggling to make sense of their limited insights (Buckingham 1987).)

Maccabe's commentary provides a link with classical Marxism and its characteristic argumentation. Marx himself spent a good deal of time expounding rival views (British economists' explanations of the origin of surplus value, for example), before leading the reader to perceive their contradictions and faults (Marx 1977). Marx's own account emerges, not at all clearly or consistently, as one which offers the deeper truth 'under the surface', and claims to keep all the insights of those economists, while apparently proceeding to solve the major problems with them. The use of rhetorical figures of speech (surface-depth or base-superstructure metaphors, concepts like totality, and various optical or physical analogies) which allude to this deeper truth have been noticed and dismissed with disappointment and irritation by those seeking a scientific Marxism (Mepham 1979), but as narrative techniques they work well to involve and convince readers by offering revelation and order as a solution to tension and puzzlement, precisely in the classic realist manner.

Indeed, we now know that these argumentational techniques occupy crucial parts of the work of all the major social theorists. These techniques are what gives classical sociology its dubious foundational nature, as I have briefly suggested in the Introduction. One famous critique dismisses

Weber's discussion of ideal types as a technique merely to tell a plausible story (Hindess 1977). In the light of postmodernism, this seems undeniable, but no longer a disappointment or insult.

On a less lofty plane, much pedagogical writing and broadcasting, in school textbooks (Wexler 1982) and in higher education (Thompson 1979) seems to employ realist techniques. Typically, a number of views will be summarised and their flaws displayed. Then a real or privileged account emerges, sometimes explicitly, sometimes more subtly, to leave the readers or viewers feeling they have learned something. What has been learned may be that there is no right answer or organised perspective that will deliver the truth, of course.

I have read and heard many examples of this kind of approach in face-to-face teaching too. My own college (College of St Mark and St John, Plymouth, UK) offers a rationale for lectures that comes close to acknowledging that the summary and ordering of academic accounts is at the heart of good pedagogy. Indeed, before we consider a critique, it is worth outlining the merits of the approach. Realism is subtler than straightforward attempts to manipulate an audience, as in some of the examples where the main discourse is simply told, all at one level, as it were. Given what was said above about motivation and justification, academic realism has many pedagogic advantages. It would be worth considering the example of telephonists' training programs, identified as a problem in Lewis's (1989) survey. Telephonists might be more interested and motivated by an approach that offers flawed alternatives, explains their flaws and lets the recipient 'discover' the best way to answer the telephone, rather than simply being instructed always to give the firm's name etc. (or whatever).

It is easy to see the problems with the approach too, though. The recipients' discovery of the underlying message of the piece is stage-managed (see Atkinson & Delamont 1976). If the story is skilfully told, there is an inevitability about the conclusions. The reader/viewer is passive, swept along as a mere spectator, in a way that has been pre-determined or positioned by the narrative itself. There is no pleasure in, and precious little space for, the recipient wanting to deviate from the narrator's constructions. A fully critical engagement with a text (not universally desirable as argued above) would seem to require a different technique.

Other dangers await the unwary would-be realist too. Structuralist analyses of discourse insist that even writers or speakers do not fully control a narrative (Culler 1975), that pre-established meanings cluster around the signs one uses, and the conventions one deploys, and these can return to haunt the narrative, especially if the intention is to be both critical and popular.

Two sorts of examples make this clear. In one, Thompson discusses the impact of the case-study types of broadcast television programs used on OU social science courses (Thompson 1979). In one actual program, the intention of the program makers was to argue that unemployment was a structural matter, not the fault of individuals themselves. But the technique used to make the story convincing involved showing a number of unemployed individuals talking to camera. Personification of an issue does make for good television, but it also contradicts those analyses that operate at a non-individual level: the words in the program might have been immaculately critical but the images and the story-telling conventions offered a much more conservative and commonsensical account. Thompson suspects that this latter account was the one taken up by many students and other viewers.

In the other example, a famous controversy arose over an interesting attempt at critical realism in the making of a series of dramas – 'Days of Hope' – about British labour history in the early decades of this century. The intention of 'Days of Hope' was to present a grass-roots activist account of events such as the General Strike of 1926. This account was to employ popular televisual forms like personification and conventional costume dramatisation – we saw the events through the eyes of a family, each member of which held a different stance on the events, and their arguments and understandings were located in carefully reconstructed authentic settings. It was a Trotskyite soap opera. As one of the characters (Ben) discovered that the only answer lay in the overcoming of capitalism through organised mass action by the proletariat, so were the viewers supposed to follow, and draw the lesson for contemporary events.

Many critics admired the intention, but feared that the realist form compromised the whole message – viewers would be likely to see the whole series as merely a soap opera or costume drama, to sink into that pleasurable passive spectating as the action unfolded, or, worst of all, to relate conventionally to the program, getting interested in the marital turmoils of the characters, and disattending entirely to the pedagogic moments when Ben and his friends discuss the history of the German workers' movement (Bennett *et al.* 1981). Any teacher will know of analogous moments when students remember the jokes but not the concepts in their lectures, or misrecognise pedagogical discourse as conventional bar-room talk.

Anxieties like this have led radicals in the past to abandon realism altogether, and to develop much more challenging and uncompromising forms of communication. Just as an exercise in breaking free from the hold of our training, it is useful for distance educators and educational technologists to investigate these efforts to develop critical insights in an audience.

Brechtian theatre, for example, refuses to let audiences settle back into a passive mode, by employing techniques such as deliberately exaggerated speech or songs, actors breaking or changing role on stage, audience participation, or the refusal to bring the staged events to a pleasurable closed conclusion. The same techniques have been deployed in radical cinema, notably in avant-garde cinema such as that of Godard (Walsh 1985).

Godard film pieces such as 'Weekend' or 'Pravda' were designed to shock the audience into critical analysis by breaking many of the conventions of popular cinema – sound and image often clashed, the camera did obtrusive things (like panning through 360 degrees or turning to show the crew, or wandering away from the actors who were speaking at the time), and there were no attempts to make things easy or entertaining for the viewer (as in the famous long and tedious single takes, the raucous and sometimes inaudible sound, the absence of subtitles when Czech workers speak, the disinterest in the fate of the main characters, the absence of credits, and so on).

Godard set out precisely to make viewers aware of the conventions of filming, as a step in forcing them to sort out sounds and images for themselves instead of relying upon an unobtrusive narrator.

Wexler suggests that pedagogues too should 'bare the device of [the textbook's] own assemblage ... force a moment of estrangement and critical distance' (1982, p.283). The significance of Wexler's suggestion is obvious for distance educators, who are so wedded to written texts. Avant-garde writers might provide some ideas here. Adorno's admiration for the avant-garde finds a reflection in his own uncompromising written style, with its celebration of contradiction, chiasm, incompleteness, exhortations to the reader to be open to their experience instead of seeking formulae, and his refusal to be bound by any academic division of labour – the very opposite of effective communication as developed in conventional educational technology. Educational technologists of the old school would want to dismiss all this straightaway – but there are no grounds other than taste for rejecting non-realist strategies.

I have shown avant-garde films to students, as part of a film studies course, and I have confirmed to my own satisfaction the cautious notes sounded by Adorno himself (Arato 1978): avant-garde films can lead only to titillation rather than insight. Most students remember the shocking or erotic bits but not the solemn political diatribes in 'Weekend' or 'Tout va Bien'. When they see Jane Fonda in the latter they draw upon their own knowledge of her, and find it amusing to see the symbol of healthy living in the 1980s holding a photograph of an erect penis while discussing very 1960s' attitudes to women and sexuality. They often get annoyed by the seven-minute take of a traffic jam in 'Weekend', exactly as Godard intended, but fail to go on to develop a critique of the soulless nature of advanced capitalism. Even avant-garde forms are often not enough to overcome the conventional meanings and stances that students bring to the viewing. Very few students have been deeply impressed and affected enough to want to come away and discuss radical politics, as Godard intended. Of course, these particular on-campus students have to write essays about these films and have them graded too.

Despite these reservations, though, some students do gain insight from sessions involving viewing avant-garde films. My impression is that it is not a very much smaller proportion of successes than those who receive my most immaculately structured realist pieces. What would be the case in distance education if avant-garde and realist approaches were used, say through video?

CONCLUSION

The conventional educational technology that we all know does not have a monopoly on effective communication. It does not have just the one alternative or rival – the pedantic, scholarly, incoherent, restricted ramblings of elderly academics. Rational techniques always want to dismiss other forms of reason as simply irrational and worthless. There is a range of techniques available to distance educators and others interested in communicating with people, especially if one wants to involve and stimulate them. Of course, sometimes one wants primarily to instruct them, to employ strategic forms of communication, as a necessary stage to later, more emancipatory interludes. In brief, conventional rational educational technology has a valuable place, but we need no longer hold it to be fully self-sufficient.

In the face of the trenchant postmodernist critique that has transformed social science, it is impossible to hold to educational technology as a universal discipline, offering principles of design that are so obviously superior as to need no justification or argument. Those principles are no more (and no less) acceptable than the ideas behind Brechtian theatre or avant-garde films. Educational technology will have to face this conclusion eventually, and will then be propelled out of its self-imposed lofty isolation into the hurly burly of competing communicative and argumentational narratives that characterise educational practice.

Educational technology will lose its claims to universality, but there are positive benefits to be gained as well. No discipline can persist simply by isolating itself from criticism (behind one of those academic divisions of labour, for example), or by allying itself uncritically to enthusiastic modernisers. They tend to move on rapidly to their next enthusiasm, leaving their supporters to cope with the real complexities and the deep scepticism of those in the system.

Educational technology could become a wing of the public relations industry, and this seems increasingly likely in British educational organisations, offering a rationalisation (as apology) of policy. Or it could retain and rediscover its earlier critical intentions, and continue to perform immanent critique of pedagogic practices, carefully elucidating then checking claims and suggesting alternatives. That form of critique can be deepened and strengthened by the sorts of alternatives to *zweckrationalitat* and classical realism I have discussed here.

Finally, Evans and Nation (1989b) end their conclusion by raising the pertinent question about whether all these possibilities can ever be realised. My own response would involve looking for suitable social groups who might be interested in reviving the critical project of educational technology. In my own book, this led to pessimistic conclusions. Critical theory tends to be pessimistic about the prospect of real political muscle allying itself to emancipation, and for very good reasons. Nevertheless, recent developments in higher education could be seen as the faintest signs that an interest in critique might be able to be revived.

The old clash between rationalisers and romantics in university politics, or their equivalents in schools (Redican 1987), has been superceded by events. Rationalisation has progressed even further and faster than had been thought possible in the United Kingdom, as market forces combined with strong government interventions impact upon education organisations at all levels. Accountancy rather than educational technology offers the guiding ideology for modern managers, and public relations replaces rational policy. Rationalisation uses an even more modern and universal language than educational technology, and conventional educational technology finds itself left behind. The pendulum has swung so far towards these developments, though, that educational technology is now on the same side as the romantic (and radical) critics by comparison: accountancy offers such crude reductions and operationalisations of education that the old debates seem indulgent.

Further, crises are beginning to develop in practice in the rational transformations of educational organisations. Management is perilously close to a serious loss of legitimacy as new initiatives sweep down from outside, and rival fashions and practices ebb and flow with increasing frequency (each one having to claim that it is inevitable, natural, functional and so on). My local institutions have seen a bewildering variety of management styles and organisational models in the last few years – departments and subject groups, interdisciplinary faculties, matrix structures, modular courses, deaneries, line management, human relations, mission statements and the rest. Managers spend a lot of time defending these models to a sceptical and skilled critical audience, only to be forced to dismantle the structures almost before they have solidified, as political alliances change at higher levels. Defending the changes by referring to these larger bodies displaces the loss of legitimacy upwards, precisely as Habermas (1976) suggests, and there are now few colleagues who would see the latest initiatives as legitimate or reasonable, or who would risk any time developing any allegiances to them.

There are signs of motivational crisis too in the system in the United Kingdom, as school teachers and lecturers leave in large numbers or cannot be found in some shortage subjects. Those that remain develop coping strategies or, if unsuccessful, succumb to stress. As management techniques and rhetorics are increasingly borrowed from industry, so the motivational problems associated with scientific management are being rediscovered, and educational administrators are trying to become facilitators, motivators and moral leaders (after some years of hard-headed authoritarianism!).

Even the customers, officially at the forefront of the changes, seem little impressed. New structures and organisational forms have not provided a more efficient teaching system nor a smoother transition into working life. Ironically, in higher education, the managers themselves have to promote and reproduce the myth of the traditional university, as a marketing ploy, as can be seen in the many glossy prospectuses or promotional videos: they cannot fail to reproduce at the same time the contrast between past and present that measures and displays the extent of colonisation by *zweckrationalitat*.

Rational techniques have been pushed to an unacceptable limit, and are in crisis. There is space for alternative stories of educational process to be told, and more who will listen. Educational technology needs to join with others, including distance educators, in telling those stories.

END NOTE: *BEYOND THE TEXT*

TERRY EVANS AND BRUCE KING

Why an *end note*? As editors we wanted see this collection of important contributions brought to an appropriate degree of closure, but not closed, thus we were concerned to avoid connotations which might derive from the conventional 'conclusion' or 'summary'. The former suggests a logical end point to a discussion, whereas our desire would be that readers see this volume as a starting point for further reflection in areas of their own interest in distance education. Normally, 'summary' suggests a drawing together towards some coherent theme which we feel would do a disservice to the difference in the contributions of our authors. *Beyond the Text* is not an attempt to provide a consistent or definitive exposition of the areas subjected to reflection herein. To reduce such diverse contributions on four critical issues in distance education to a series of generalisations in common would be in some way to devalue them and misrepresent the basis on which they were included in the text.

This is not to deny that the contributors, and indeed the editors, have certain things in common. All are practising distance educators and in varying degrees each of us has attempted to place our own practice under a degree of critical reflection. This has been done from a variety of different backgrounds and theoretical perspectives. Some of us are students, others academics in the field, while a third group are administrators. This text demonstrates that people have valuable contributions to make regardless of where they stand at any particular time in the contours of distance education. It also serves to underpin the fluidity of our involvements. Academics take on administration, occasionally administrators put pen to paper, and either can be involved in study. Students engage in a degree of reflection on key areas of theory and practice which illuminate them for the rest of the field. And people have very different reasons for authorship. Some of our contributors have drawn on work being presented for doctoral degrees. Of our academic colleagues, some have contributed because they believe it is important to extend themselves, through the text, in their particular interpretation of some aspect of the field. As editors, this is our second experience of placing these particular contributions before an audience. Our early motivation was to provide students in the Masters degree in Distance Education with a certain kind of educational opportunity. Although this this text differs from that presented to our students, the critical issues and the approach taken by the authors remain similar.

What we share is a commitment as advocates of certain kinds of change in distance education. While we have very different backgrounds and have never as a group considered our educational or political perspectives, it is fair to say that we all have demonstrated a desire for changes in distance education practice which are more liberating for students and thus can be generally assigned to the progressive side of the political continuum.

Thus the purpose of this end note is to encourage new beginnings, or at least reinforce decisions those who have read the text may have made to reflect more critically upon practice in their field. It is our attempt to move the spirit of positive criticism evident in the work of our contributors to the world of the reader, to extend it beyond the text.

This rehearses the discussions we shared when considering how our students might use the initial version of these materials. We concluded:

> It is important that the critical issues presented in the unit needed to be engaged by the students, not just as areas of content in themselves, but rather as exemplars of the sorts of issues which surround all educational (and social) contexts. They could also be seen as several different individuals' attempts to reflect critically on their particular issue;' so the processes and approaches to critical reflection on issues also needed to be engaged. (*Critical Issues in Distance Education, Book 1*, p.13)

Our purpose was both to highlight the contested and a problematic nature of distance education theory and practice and to encourage its exploration through processes of critical reflection. When determining the basis for assessing our students (that unavoidable and most uncomfortable aspect of higher education) we held that students, in a scholarly way, should address some issue of concern to themselves and ground the substance of their assignments in the process of critical reflection, focussing their work on practice in distance education, and arguing clearly for ways in which practice could be changed.

This normative element, incorporation a commitment to change distance education theory and practice, is deliberate. It is the embodiment of the advocacy stance referred to above.

The metaphor embedded in our title further instances our purpose. We wish those who read this collection to move in a considered way beyond conventional practice. Our concern is that the field faces present challenges which have the potential to produce a significant shift in the ways we think about and practise our profession. As such, they have the power to be liberating both for those involved and for the wider community. Or the challenges can reinforce orthodoxy.

We are acutely conscious of the forces for conservatism which bedevil education generally in periods of financial constraint. Innovations are curtailed, options diminish and the ethos of educational instrumentalism pervades political and community thinking. There are signs of this shift in each of the areas covered in this text.

For example, recent moves to meet the higher education needs of Australian regional communities have involved attempts to replicate the lecture-based approaches of traditional on-campus teaching. This cuts across years of reflection on distance education practice, diminishes the real achievements of the field in recognizing the human dimension of distance teaching, and sacrifices much of what present students value in their distance programs (for example, flexibility of study freed from the constraints of time and place). In such circumstances, developments in communications technology have as much potential to reinforce conservative practices as they have to be genuinely liberating.

Again, facilitation of access to and equity within education would be held by many to be part of the *raison d'etre* of distance provision. The field is nonetheless being challenged by those who see such goals as an attack on academic standards. This position in part reflects pressures on academic staff brought about by diminishing resources, greater government intervention in universities and further education colleges, and the consequent distractions these create for teaching and research commitments.

The tangibility of distance education courses – the produced package of learning materials – affords some appeal to administrators and politicians in developing nations. They hold out the promise of a 'quick fix' in meeting some part of the educational dilemmas such nations face. As our contributors have demonstrated, many of our most conventional courses and teaching approaches are manifestly inappropriate in such settings. The potential for exploitation (with aid slipping too readily into trade) and a dependence-inducing intellectual imperialism must be critically considered and, where necessary, exposed by the distance education community. In this, of all areas, our orthodoxy is most open to challenge.

This collection constitutes an opportunity to consider the familiar in possibly unfamiliar ways. It seeks also to present broader perspectives on those matters generally acknowledged as encompassing the scope of the field. It seeks to replace orthodoxy with passionate advocacy for liberating change. As such, it invites all of us to look to familiar (or personal) distance education practice and to progress beyond what we presently know and understand. In this sense, we seek to move with you *Beyond the Text*.

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This book brings together a collection of contemporary writing on distance education which is both provocative and stimulating, and which makes an important contribution to national and international debates about distance education. There are substantial discussions of the nature of distance education and its relation to disability, developing nations, gender, technology, autonomy and independence. The chapters in Beyond the Text are based on revised essays written by consultants for the Critical Issues in Distance Education course offered within the joint Deakin University and University of South Australia Master of Distance Education program. There is a substantial bibliography and a full author and subject index.

Beyond the Text is an invaluable asset for every thinking distance educator who wants to critique and improve their practice and its contexts.

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